

COMMUNITY ORGANISATIONS AND HOUSEHOLD ENERGY

FINAL PROJECT REPORT

May 2015

Dr Andrew Reeves

Institute of Energy and Sustainable Development,

De Montfort University, Leicester.

Executive Summary

The Community Organisations and Household Energy (COHE) research project has sought to explore the process, practice and impacts of household home energy visits delivered by or in partnership with community organisations in the UK. This was undertaken through semi-structured interviews and collection of supporting data for twelve projects across the UK, representing a diverse range of scales, contexts and delivery models.

This research is responding to a socio-political context where policy makers and practitioners are increasingly looking to the community and voluntary sector to support delivery of social and environmental initiatives.

In the case of home energy advice visits, this raises a number of questions around the capacity, competence and willingness for community actors to engage with this work, and how this role would fit into strategic approaches to supporting fuel poor households across the UK.

The present research engaged with four types of actor that are leading the case study projects:

- Local authority
- Independent Specialist charity
- Semi-professional charity
- Voluntary groups

The latter two can be classed as Community Organisations within the scope of this research. The former two are key actors in provision of home energy advice that may or may not engage with community organisations and members to assist with the delivery of this work. The research aimed to document the inter-relationships between what was delivered, how projects were run and the evaluation of impacts. Some key findings that emerged from this analysis are summarised below, followed by discussion of some implications.

Key Findings

1. There is a good case for resourcing long-term local energy advice programmes targeted at the fuel poor

Local referral networks of voluntary and public sector organisations are successfully reaching many of the most vulnerable households and arranging for home energy advice visits by dedicated energy advice initiatives.

These visits are achieving annual financial savings for householders measured in hundreds of thousands of pounds, and greatly exceeding the funds spent on delivering support. In one programme in London, over 70% of householders are reporting that their homes are warmer as a result of the intervention.

Current practice points to two main candidates to lead delivery – local authorities or locally based voluntary sector organisations with sufficient experience and capacity to run such a service if commissioned by the local authority. For a given local area the most appropriate choice is likely to depend upon the particular expertise available within candidate local organisations.

Based upon current practice, core funding for the service could in principle come from Public Health England and Local Authorities, with top-up funding for particular projects coming from grant funds.

2. Community organisations can play a key role in facilitating this energy advice provision

For the projects reviewed in the present research that were reaching significant numbers of householders, the role played by community organisations included:

- Promoting and facilitating home energy visits through individuals/organisations embedded within communities of place or interest
- For community organisations in contact with vulnerable people, signposting those at risk of fuel poverty through a local referral network to an energy advice service

3. Home energy advice visits for fuel poverty reduction and carbon reduction may be incompatible

The benefits of home energy advice visits lie in a tailored support approach, which is as applicable for fuel poor households as it is for wealthier households seeking to reduce carbon emissions. However the priority of the local energy advice agencies which have been studied and advocated for in this research is to support the fuel poor – such organisations are likely to be unwilling to offer home visits to the relatively affluent unless dedicated funding was made available. There is little evidence from this research that such householders would pay for a home visit. Some of the remaining options identified from current practice in the present research include:

- Community organisations offer home energy advice visits on a voluntary basis
 - This holds some potential but is likely to lead to patchy coverage across the country, depending upon the willingness of volunteers to lead and deliver projects
 - Projects would be reliant on grant funding
- Householders can receive advice over the phone and online
- Householders contact tradesman to explore options for technical measures.

4. Improved funding programmes for energy saving measures are required to support households in fuel poverty

Despite the apparent success of local professional energy advice services in reaching vulnerable people, they currently have little to offer them in energy efficiency terms, save for advice and some minor home improvements. Each of the interviewees with most experience of working to support those in fuel poverty stressed the need for funding programmes that could facilitate improvements to homes of the fuel poor at little or no cost to the householder.

Further Research and Analysis

Moving beyond the present research, a number of opportunities for future research and practice have emerged from this study.

1. Mapping energy advice practice across the UK

This report is suggesting that each local authority area in the UK (at a district/borough/unitary authority geographical scale) could develop an energy efficiency advice offer targeted at fuel poor households. A small research project could usefully map current practice across the country and explore this proposal's viability in more detail.

2. Knowledge sharing between actors delivering local service

Linked in with point 1, when the relevant actors undertaking or interested in this work are identified, it would be beneficial to organise knowledge sharing activities to pool good practice, whether through events, publications, practitioner networks or otherwise.

3. Knowledge sharing with and between voluntary groups doing home visits

This research has also highlighted a number of effective and innovative practices being undertaken by voluntary groups in this area, with the one major limitation of struggling to reach fuel poor households. A knowledge sharing process between such groups and with professional organisations delivering on a larger scale could be beneficial – in particular to assist voluntary groups to better reach and help the fuel poor.

Acknowledgements

This research wouldn't have been possible without project team members from twelve household home energy visit projects giving up their time to take part in interviews, surveys and to assist by sharing other information. Thank you to all of them. Thanks are also due to the Cheshire Lehmann Fund who generously funded and supported this project.

Table of Contents

1	Introduction.....	6
2	Literature Review	6
2.1	Policy Context.....	6
2.2	Impacts of Home Energy Advice Visits	7
2.3	Partnerships	8
2.4	Community Capability and Capacity	8
2.5	Evaluation and Measuring Impact	9
3	Methodology	10
3.1	Overall Design	10
3.2	Research Participants.....	10
3.3	Interviews.....	13
3.4	Project Team Surveys.....	13
3.5	Beneficiary Surveys	13
3.6	Supporting documents.....	13
3.7	Analysis.....	13
4	What was done.....	14
4.1	Interventions delivered	14
4.2	Home Energy Advice Visit Process	18
4.3	Follow-up activities	20
5	How Projects are Delivered	21
5.1	Organisational Models	21
5.2	Financial Models	23
5.3	Staffing and Volunteers.....	26
5.4	Reaching Householders.....	32
5.5	Contextual Influences	37
6	Evaluation and Impacts	41
6.1	Evaluation Methods	41
6.2	Reach of the project.....	42
6.3	Perceptions of Home Visits	44
6.4	Impacts.....	44
7	Project Team Reflections.....	47

7.1	Tailored Home visits are effective.....	47
7.2	Depth versus Breadth.....	47
7.3	Reaching and helping the fuel poor	47
7.4	Insecurity of funding	48
7.5	Lack of funding for measures	49
7.6	Poor evaluation processes	49
7.7	Relationship to Carbon Reduction Interventions.....	50
7.8	Wish to carry out small-scale measures.....	50
7.9	Help on a journey	50
8	Discussion	51
8.1	Effective fuel poverty interventions?	51
8.2	Effective delivery models?	51
8.3	How to fund an effective delivery model?	51
8.4	How does a local fuel poverty energy advice project relate to the climate change agenda?	52
8.5	How do community organisations support local action on fuel poverty?	52
8.6	Are climate Change and fuel poverty agendas compatible?	53
9	Conclusions.....	53
10	Bibliography.....	54
	Appendix A: One-page Project Summary	56
	Appendix B: Participant Information Sheet.....	57
	Appendix C: Pilot Interview Schedule.....	59
	Appendix D: Final Interview Schedule	60
	Appendix E: Project Team Survey.....	61
	Appendix F: Beneficiary Survey	63

1 Introduction

This research aims to explore the role of community organisations in engaging householders in undertaking energy efficiency measures, with a focus on projects that use home energy advice visits as part of their intervention strategy. Overall, the research focuses on the inter-relationships between *what* is done, *how* the projects are organised and an *evaluation* of their impact. Data was collected on the activities of twelve case study projects in the UK involving community organisations, including interviews, internal evaluation reports and short surveys of participants and beneficiaries.

This report begins by summarising relevant academic, policy and practitioner literature that was reviewed at the start of the project. The project methodology is then described in part 3, followed by four sections (parts 4 to 7) summarising the evidence gathered from the case studies. Part 8 discusses these findings, prior to some concluding remarks in part 9.

2 Literature Review

2.1 Policy Context

The UK Government has recently acknowledged the potential role of Community Organisations in supporting action on fuel poverty and energy efficiency in a range of policy documents. The Government's latest Fuel Poverty Strategy (DECC 2014b) suggests that "voluntary organisations and community groups... could work proactively with trained energy advisers" in an advocacy role, and points towards the Big Energy Saving Network project as an example of this approach. DECC's (2014a) Community Energy Strategy and Energy Efficiency strategy (DECC 2013) frames the potential role of community groups as: *generation; demand reduction; demand management; collective purchasing*. In particular, in relation to the present research DECC (2014a) claims that "there is a role for community groups to share energy saving advice" and that householders "may be more receptive to energy advice when it comes from others in their community". Research into methodologies for the roll-out of smart meters argued that "some interventions may be better delivered by third parties such as community organisations" (DECC 2014d).

Linked with this interest in community approaches, there has been recent UK Government funding for projects using community organisations to assist with delivery. This includes the "Big Energy Saving Network", through which community organisations deliver advice through events and the Community Energy Efficiency Outreach Programme (2012-13) (DECC 2014c).

"Community" is taken as having a range of meanings in research and practice addressing community involvement in household energy efficiency projects. DECC's Green Deal Communities Programme (DECC 2014a) identifies local authorities as "community" actors for promote Green Deal assessments; projects within DECC's (2014c) community outreach programme were mostly delivered or designed by voluntary sector organisations employing paid staff, rather than volunteer-run community groups; Howden-Chapman et al. (2011) and McLean-Connor (2011) use the term "community" as a synonym for local institutions (e.g. media, businesses, local authorities).

There are some key common issues that community organisations face in working on energy projects. DECC (2014a) identifies these in its Community Energy Strategy as:

- Partnerships ;
- Community Capability and Capacity
- Evaluation and Measuring Impact

These three categories are used in the introduction to frame discussion around community approaches to home energy advice visits. For the purposes of this research, “community organisations” is taken as meaning voluntary sector organisations or unincorporated groups active within a particular local area.

2.2 Impacts of Home Energy Advice Visits

A home energy advice visit is just one of many possible behaviour-change interventions which could seek to support householders to reduce energy consumption. Abrahamse et al. (2005) describes such an intervention as one of half a dozen possible household energy efficiency behaviour change strategies, with others including offering feedback, targets and incentives.

Traditionally, many home energy advice visits have taken an “Information-Only Approach”, providing information to householders but leaving it up to them to decide on any actions afterwards. This can be contrasted to an “Assisted Action Approach” (DECC 2014f), through which beneficiaries are supported to take action at the point of intervention. This approach is attracting support from Government, and will be used for Big Energy Saving Network projects (DECC 2014f).

Researchers have identified a number of factors associated with the positive impact of home energy advice visits. Ingle (2013) identified the chance to have a discussion with the auditor as the key benefit of home visits. Darby (1999) highlights that energy advice is more likely to have a positive impact if it is opportunistic, that is given at a time of change in the household, and client-led. Devine-Wright & Devine-Wright (2006) attribute the positive impact of Leicester’s Green Doctor project to several factors: “Grounding energy and environmental issues in what counts for each householder; Linking up different projects and agencies to renew neighbourhoods; Optimally installing energy measures; Troubleshooting for other problems or inefficiencies”. The delivery mechanisms that supported these outcomes included allowing up to half a day per visit and the appropriate personal qualities of advisors.

Measuring the impact of home energy advice visits where action is not taken at the time is made more difficult by the complex nature of household decision making. Wilson et al. (2014) argue that decisions to implement energy efficiency measures are best understood in context (e.g. of household, economy, etc.), as a journey (rather than as a single decision) and are linked to general household refurbishment decisions. In this context, advice may take months or years to be acted upon, even if decision makers in the home are in agreement with the advisor.

Prior to undertaking this research, very few well-documented public case studies of community energy advice projects could be found. A rare example of a report that combines description of activities and process alongside evaluation is Devine-Wright & Devine-Wright (2006), which describes Leicester’s Green Doctor project. This report argued that tailoring advice is beneficial, and stressed the importance of acknowledging and responding to individual householders’ circumstances and motivations (e.g. comfort; health) when giving advice and support. The projects briefly described in the 2013 Cheshire Lehmann fund conference report (CLF 2013) support this picture.

A number of reports have highlighted the potential for projects involving community organisations to more effectively reach householders. The Wolverton Energy Group project (DECC 2014c) involved advice delivery on the doorstep, and found that householders were more likely to engage when community volunteers did the door-knocking. Rugkåsa et al. (2007) reported a successful fuel poverty engagement partnership project, where community organisations did much of the local marketing and public engagement.

Overall, this picture indicates good potential for community organisations delivering home energy advice visits to have a positive impact, but also highlights a shortage of published evidence, both in academia and in terms of other reports in the public domain.

2.3 Partnerships

Delivery of home energy advice through partnership is commonplace in the UK and internationally. A number of partnership models are described in practitioner literature: local voluntary sector organisation partnering with other sectors (Devine-Wright & Devine-Wright 2006; CSE 2014); Utility Companies with local community organisations (McLean-Connor 2011); National voluntary sector organisations partnering with local community groups for delivery (DECC 2014c); partnerships with health professionals and other agencies assisting fuel-poor households (Ramsey & Pett 2003). DECC (2014d) suggests that energy sector professionals are positive overall about working with communities to deliver projects and that Local Authorities are also often key partners for success (DECC 2014d).

There are therefore a number of ways in which community organisations could take part in such projects, either alone or in partnership. One of the potential benefits of their participation is their scope to harness the power of trusted social networks. DECC (2014e) argues that energy advice “...needs to be contextualised and socially embedded through trusted networks such as colleagues, friends, relatives and neighbours”. McMichael and Shipworth (2013) suggest that householders look to social networks for trust and guidance when making energy-related decisions.

This picture points towards there being value in exploring the role of community organisations in such projects in a range of partnership scenarios.

2.4 Community Capability and Capacity

A number of authors have argued that the personal qualities of an energy advisor are key to the success of a home visit. Devine-Wright & Devine-Wright (2006), in a study of a voluntary sector project in the UK, suggest that some key personal traits for successful visits include being: “informed, friendly and courteous”; “sensitive to cultural differences”; and “patient”. These were seen as key to engendering trust and leaving householders feeling positively about the visit.

Literature on energy advice in any context backs up this picture. Ingle (2013) argues that a successful visit relies on personal qualities and expertise. Darby (1999) describes some attributes of good advisors: technical knowledge, knowledge of fuel tariff issues, grasp of local organisations, able to build trust, accessibility, friendliness, experience, good communication skills. Maby (2009) suggests that good advisers are able to combine technical knowledge (e.g. ability to offer a whole house approach) with adaptive capacity (ability to understand technology in context of particular homes), along with personal skills and other traits.

In the context of community organisation projects, this invites the question of to what extent their members possess the required skills and personal traits to deliver effective energy advice. No published research on this question was found at the start of this study, although a number of authors have engaged with the question of community capacity to run and manage sustainability projects. From a theoretical perspective, Middlemiss and Parrish (2010) highlight the key importance of capacity within communities and community organisations to enable sustainability goals to be achieved. The personal capacity (skills, knowledge and commitment) of volunteers in community organisations was a key factor identified. Reeves et al. (2014) and FREE (2013) draw upon experience of supporting community projects to emphasise the key role of well-informed, committed members of community organisations to enable projects run by voluntary groups to happen. DECC (2014d) supports this view in its review of the potential role of community groups in smart metering rollout: “Of the communities interviewed in depth, most had a small number of core, passionate individuals who founded or ran the group and had initiated or helped to run specific projects. These individuals often had energy or sustainability experience from their professional day job. Therefore, these individuals were very knowledgeable about the subject and highly skilled in areas such as project management. This was mentioned by many projects.”

These issues raise questions for the present research – both about the capabilities and capacity of any volunteers delivering home energy advice, and also about the project management skills of community organisations delivering energy advice projects.

2.5 Evaluation and Measuring Impact

DECC’s Community Energy Strategy suggests that many community organisations struggle to effectively evaluate their projects and capture the impacts of their activities. This is a picture supported by Hobson et al. (2014), who suggest that community organisations have limited resources, and sometimes motivation, to conduct an evaluation of their project’s impact.

Energy advice is likely to be a particularly challenging area in which to measure impact. It is often provided at a time when other household changes take place, so isolating and identifying its impact can be challenging (Darby 1999). Whilst the impacts of technical measures can be modelled and estimated (e.g. draught-proofing, insulation), it is harder to quantify the impact of behavioural changes (Devine-Wright & Devine-Wright 2006).

In the literature reviewed prior to undertaking the present research, few examples of thorough evaluation were found, and even some large-scale projects with published evaluation reports appeared to gather and present very little data on their impacts (e.g. FREE 2013).

For the present research, this situation points to a need to complement evidence of project delivery with data on the impacts of delivering home energy advice, whether through internal reporting or surveys of householders receiving energy advice.

3 Methodology

3.1 Overall Design

The study sought to address the following two research questions:

1. How can community organisations effectively engage fuel poor householders in undertaking energy efficiency measures through home energy advice visits?
2. How are their projects organised and how does this relate to their delivery mechanisms and impacts?

A case study approach was chosen due to the lack of published research in this area to date, with the aim of identifying patterns, relationships, commonalities and differences between the projects. Twelve projects were sought with the intention of representing a diversity of delivery approaches and contexts:

- Projects either led by or in some way involving community organisations
- Projects run by either paid staff, volunteers or some combination of both
- Urban and Rural communities
- Projects from different UK regions
- Projects demonstrating success or best practice, and some projects that have struggle or ceased

The data sought from each project included a one-hour semi-structured interview in all cases (Method 1 below). This was supplemented where practically possible by further evidence from the project team and beneficiaries and any supporting documents provided (Methods 2 to 4).

Table 1: Methods and Rationale

Method	Rationale
1. A one-hour interview with a project organiser	Provide key factual information relating to research questions and reflections drawing on experience of running project of pros and cons of approach used and rationale behind decisions
2. A self-completed survey (online or paper-based) for other individuals involved in project delivery	Enhance validity of findings through further views on pros and cons of approach used and rationale behind decisions
3. A self-completed survey (online or paper-based) for project beneficiaries	Check (or generate) data on impacts of home visits on energy efficiency or otherwise
4. Supporting documents provided by interviewee	Provide further evidence of project delivery approach used, evidence of impacts, evaluation, etc.

3.2 Research Participants

Participants were sought through emails and face-to-face discussions with professional contacts, through inviting stakeholders in the field to contact their professional networks and through snowball sampling, following suggestions of participants. Prior to taking part, participants were provided with a one-page summary of the project (Appendix A) and a participant information sheet (Appendix B).

Details of the twelve participant projects are summarised below in the order in which they were interviewed. The lead partners in the twelve case study projects were respectively: Voluntary Groups (3); Semi-Professional Groups (that is groups straddling the boundary between voluntary and professional) (2); Independent specialist Charities (4), Local Authorities (2), Housing Associations (1). Participants were

guaranteed anonymity, so each case study is given a nickname (e.g. East Midlands Urban Volunteers) which will be used to describe it in this report.

Table 2: Case Study Summary

Case Study	Lead Partner	Visits done by	Audience	Urban / Rural	UK Region	Nickname
1	Voluntary Group	Group Members	Project Members	Urban	East Midlands	East Midlands Urban Volunteers
2	Semi-Professional Group	Group Volunteers	Two local boroughs	Urban	London	Outer London Semi-Pros
3	Semi-Professional Group	Group Volunteers	Local town and around	Rural	West Midlands	West Midlands Rural Semi-Pros
4	Voluntary Group	Group Members	Local villages	Rural	West Midlands	West Midlands Rural Volunteers
5	Housing Association	Independent Specialist Charity	Housing Association Tenants	Urban	North West	North West Urban Social Housing
6	Local Authority (Metropolitan Borough)	Independent Specialist Charity	Local borough	Urban	West Midlands	West Midlands Urban Council
7	Community Development Trust	Local Volunteers	Local area	Urban	Yorkshire and the Humber	Yorkshire Urban Area Volunteers
8	Local Authority (Metropolitan Borough)	Independent Specialist Charity	Local borough	Urban	London	Inner London Council
9	Voluntary Group	Group Members	Small Town	Rural	East Midlands	East Midlands Rural Volunteers
10	Independent Specialist Charity	Charity Staff	Local districts	Urban	West Midlands	West Midlands Urban Specialists
11	Independent Specialist Charity	Charity Staff, with volunteer support	Black and Minority Ethnic Households in City	Urban	South West	South West Urban Specialists
12	Independent Specialist Charity	Charity Staff	Local districts	Rural	Scotland	Scotland Rural Specialists

Within these twelve case studies, there were four clusters of project type which emerged during initial analysis and are used in the narrative that follows

1. Professional service (local authority) – Cases 6 and 8
2. Professional service (charity) – Cases 5, 10, 11, 12
3. Semi-professional service – Cases 2 and 3
4. Voluntary project – Cases 1, 4, 7 and 9

3.2.1 Case Summaries

A short summary of the activities of the twelve case study projects is provided below.

1: East Midlands Urban Volunteers

A project using a thermal imaging camera to help householders to identify insulation needs through a home visit. Delivered annually for three years from 2011 to 2013, not active in 2014/15.

2: Outer London Semi-Pros

A project delivering home energy advice visits through volunteers within a small environmental charity employing a handful of paid staff. Active for four years, building on previous occasional energy advice work within the charity and participation in a community engagement project with an academic partner.

3: West Midlands Rural Semi-Pros

Started in 2007 with a community carbon footprint project and went on to deliver over 2000 home energy audits. Peaked in activity in 2011, employing four staff to support a team of volunteer energy assessors. Now lacking grant funding and conducting very few home visits.

4: West Midlands Rural Volunteers

Local sustainability group active since 2008, undertaking a range of projects focussed on sustainable energy. Data collected on home energy visits, done over three years in a variety of formats, including thermal imaging and with handyman support. Energy visit work now dormant.

5: North West Urban Social Housing

Interview carried out with staff member at Independent Specialist Charity, which has conducted home energy advice visits with local social housing tenants for the past three years.

6: West Midlands Urban Council

Project started within local authority in 2011 with fuel poverty focus, aiming to reduce winter deaths and hospital admissions. Employs energy advice workers from an Independent Specialist Charity to conduct visits each winter and provides a range of support aimed at fuel poor households.

7: Yorkshire Urban Area Volunteers

Project ran for one winter in 2012. Two community volunteers recruited by local neighbourhood association and were trained as energy advisors and carried out six home visits before project folded.

8: Inner London Council

Project founded within local authority in 2010. Delivers home energy advice visits through an Independent Specialist Charity and provides a range of other support to vulnerable local households.

9: East Midlands Rural Volunteers

A community environmental group with started offering home energy visits within a rural town in 2011/12. Still active after four years, although take-up has declined significantly in recent years.

10: West Midlands Urban Specialists

A long-running independent charity, set up in the 1980s with a focus on health and social care and delivering home energy advice visits and other services for fuel poor households through its team of staff.

11: South West Urban Specialists

A long-running charity focussed predominantly on sustainability in housing energy use, which provides advice and support to householders in its local area. The case study project that the interview focussed upon was an initiative run from 2010 to 2013 to engage black and minority ethnic (BME) households in energy saving and fuel poverty reduction.

12: Scotland Rural Specialists

Set up in 2010 and now an independent charity delivering home energy advice and support targeted at those in fuel poverty. Delivers home energy advice through its staff team.

3.3 Interviews

A pilot face-to-face interview was undertaken with a member of the East Midlands Urban Volunteers project (see Appendix C). This led to very few changes to the interview schedule so it was included in the final study. The final interview schedule used is shown in Appendix D.

The remaining interviews took place on the phone, lasted between 45 and 1hr 15 minutes, and each one was recorded and fully transcribed. Most interviews were with one participant, with the exception of Case Study 10. The role of the interviewee within each organisation is shown in Table 3.

Table 3: Interviewee Roles

Case Study	Case Study Nickname	Interviewee 1 Role(s)	Interviewee 2 Role(s)
1	East Midlands Urban Volunteers	Project Co-ordinator and Home Visitor	
2	Outer London Semi-Pros	Project Co-ordinator and Home Visitor	
3	West Midlands Rural Semi-Pros	Project Co-ordinator and Home Visitor	
4	West Midlands Rural Volunteers	Project Co-ordinator and Home Visitor	
5	North West Urban Social Housing	Project Co-ordinator and Home Visitor	
6	West Midlands Urban Council	Project Co-ordinator	
7	Yorkshire Urban Area Volunteers	Home Visitor	
8	Inner London Council	Project Co-ordinator	
9	East Midlands Rural Volunteers	Project Co-ordinator and Home Visitor	
10	West Midlands Urban Specialists	Project Co-ordinator	Home Visitor
11	South West Urban Specialists	Project Co-ordinator and Home Visitor	
12	Scotland Rural Specialists	Project Co-ordinator and Home Visitor	

3.4 Project Team Surveys

Interviewees were asked to forward a link to an online survey to other members of the project team identified during the interview (see Appendix E).

3.5 Beneficiary Surveys

Interviewees were asked to forward a link to an online survey to households that had received a visit in recent years where this was practical and where other evaluation reports did not exist. The survey asked respondents to evaluate the visit and about what action, if any, they took as a result (see Appendix F).

3.6 Supporting documents

Interviewees were asked to share evaluation documents or any other written documents that would shed light on the delivery process and its impacts.

3.7 Analysis

All interviews and other documents were coded thematically using NVivo software, with concepts of interest for the two project research questions being picked out.

4 What was done

Section four summarises the data collected on the interventions carried out by each of the twelve case study projects.

4.1 Interventions delivered

The interventions carried out by each project are shown in Table 4. An X indicates an intervention delivered, a P is an intervention delivered through a partner organisation and a lower case x shows interventions not explicitly discussed but highly likely to be delivered based upon the interview discussion.

Table 4: Interventions carried out by each project

Case Study	Case Study Nickname	Financial and Fuel Poverty Support					Physical Measures			Behavioural			Other Interventions
		Tariff Switching Advice	Billing, Metering Debt Support	Benefits Maximisation	Crisis Support	Signposting to Warm Homes Discount	Referral for measures installed	Simple Measures Installed	Technical Measure Recommendations	Electricity Use Monitor	Heating Controls Advice	Behavioural Advice	
1	East Midlands Urban Volunteers							X		X	X		Thermal Imaging
2	Outer London Semi-Pros							X	X	X	X	X	
3	West Midlands Rural Semi-Pros	X							X				
4	West Midlands Rural Volunteers							X	X		X	X	Thermal Imaging; Renewables Repair
5	North West Urban Social Housing	X	X				X		X	X	X	X	
6	West Midlands Urban Council	X	X	P	X		X	X	X		X	X	Referral for health risk enforcement
7	Yorkshire Urban Area Volunteers								X		X	X	
8	Inner London Council	X	X	x	X	X		X		X	X	X	
9	East Midlands Rural Volunteers	X							X	X	X	X	Thermal Imaging
10	West Midlands Urban Specialists	X	X	x	X	X	X				X	X	
11	South West Urban Specialists	x	X	x	x		X				X	X	Referral for health risk enforcement
12	Scotland Rural Specialists	P	X	P	X		X	X			X	X	

4.1.1 Financial and Fuel Poverty Support

A clear pattern shown here is that the six professionally delivered projects all offered a range of financial and fuel poverty support, which was mostly or entirely absent from the projects run mostly or entirely by volunteers. This support included help with comparing between and switching energy suppliers, advocacy to energy companies to assist with billing problems and debt and crisis support (e.g. emergency loan of heaters, pre-payment meter top-ups).

“We also have a budget for small measures and we give out blankets, hot water bottles, bed socks, and then we do temporary loans of oil filled radiators.” West Midlands Urban Council

Phoning and liaising with energy companies was often a substantial part of the home visit where this was done.

“...spending a good portion of the time on the phone to their energy provider, advocating for the tenant and appealing on behalf of the tenant because of complicated issues that they have with their consumption and the way that they’ve been charged.” North West Urban Social Housing

Tariff switching was typically done in situ, switching householders during the visit if they were willing to, or arranging a follow-up meeting to switch later if not. The Scotland Rural Specialists project saved time during home visits by outsourcing this service to a local social enterprise who would help householders to explore options and potential savings at no cost. Outsourcing was used by several projects where they felt that expertise was available elsewhere and it would be a better use of resources.

“So it means we are doing the detailed advice that we feel can benefit and we outsource the stuff that we feel can be outsourced and that’s the benefit checking and the switching service and that way we feel that people get – we feel it’s best use of resources.” Scotland Rural Specialists

4.1.2 Physical Measures

With regard to physical measures, namely anything from small-scale measures such as draught proofing to larger scale work such as solid wall insulation, each project would either install improvements, refer to a partner organisation for installation (done for social housing or measures covered through local funding schemes) or recommend measures. The standard practice for professional projects was to refer to partner organisations for work to be done.

“If they need a heating system, we’ll refer out, we don’t do it ourselves.” West Midlands Urban Specialists

For referrals within social housing, this issue attracted much discussion. Major insulation works might be delayed for months or years until a programme of works was due, while social housing budgets for repairs were reported as very low due to recent funding cuts.

“Social landlords have programmes for improving properties which go over many, many years and some of our clients in desperate circumstances –

almost all they can do is wait until the improvement programme reaches their particular property, which is very frustrating. We've had meetings with chief executives of housing associations and it seems to make no difference." West

Midlands Rural Semi-Pros

However there was evidence of prioritisation of works for tenants with certain health conditions, but limits to this process on grounds of cost.

"And obviously what we can then do depends on the tenure. If its council housing, we have an escalated system now for people with respiratory conditions where we can almost guarantee we get things sorted out." Inner

London Council

"We understand that [the] Council can't accelerate everybody and sometimes if they are going in to do the estate very shortly the cost of accelerating that person [is prohibitive]"

In many cases either small scale repairs were needed (e.g. bleeding radiators, top-up loft insulation) or projects were keen to install low-cost energy efficiency measures (e.g. radiator panels, chimney balloons). Insurance and professional liability was cited as a barrier by several projects.

"We would need a band of DIY experts to do that, and I think if you get involved with that, you need to think in terms of warranties and insurance to cover yourself. And also working in a home, the public liability insurance that would go with it." East Midlands Rural Volunteers

Those that did carry out installations overcome this barrier by employing a "handyman" to undertake the work. Around 50% of households visited by West Midlands Urban Council and Scotland Rural Specialists received a follow-up handyman visit. For some projects, such as Outer London Semi-Pros, the installation of simple measures such as radiator panels and an electricity monitor were a vital part of their service.

"For homes, you have to give them equipment, otherwise they don't have the same gratitude or they don't realise what can be done." Outer London Semi-Pros

Within the West Midlands Rural Volunteers project, the handyman was available for one day's work for free with equipment costs not included. The project reported that the handyman commonly got more paid work with the householder beyond the one day, so the offer of a free days' work (covered by £100 of grant funding) frequently led to further employment. This project was notable for the many examples of non-standard small-scale measures that appeared to bring a significant difference.

"We had a couple of houses which had blown air heating with big loft ducts, and insulating those loft ducts makes a really big difference to the efficiency of the system, otherwise you just heat the bloody loft!" West Midlands Rural

Volunteers

When referral or direct improvements were not possible, interventions were simply recommended, either during the visit or in some cases, afterwards in a written report. At times, advisors felt that this would be affordable and manageable:

“A lot of the things that came out of the discussion with the participant would be stuff that people could do themselves with a modicum of skill, like extra insulation and stuff behind radiators” East Midlands Urban Volunteers

“Basically we’d give them a sort of shopping list where we’d say you’ll feel the biggest benefit from these things, these are the things you can do at very low cost, these are the things that will cost you a lot more.” West Midlands Rural Volunteers

In other cases, advisors were frustrated that either the householder wouldn’t have the physical ability to carry it out (e.g. an elderly householder living alone) or that the cost would be prohibitive unless the work was fully grant-funded.

4.1.3 Behavioural Advice

With one exception, all projects made behavioural recommendations and sought to check that householders could operate their heating systems effectively.

For households that were struggling to keep warm where insulation wasn’t viable, there was some evidence of pragmatic behavioural advice to best manage this situation

“Telling them when you go to bed you open this door, which is the door to the stairs, an hour before you go up to bed, and upstairs you shut every door except the bathroom door and bedroom door, and you’ll go to bed reasonably warm.” West Midlands Rural Volunteers

4.1.4 Other interventions

Two of the professional projects made referrals to the local authority for mandatory action to address damp or cold problems. One of these projects, West Midlands Urban Council, was able to efficiently arrange such referrals through its position within the local authority’s Home Improvement Team.

Three of the volunteer-run projects used a thermal imaging camera as a tool to engage householders and to identify insulation needs.

The West Midlands Rural Volunteers project also reported on innovative work to repair malfunctioning solar thermal and PV installations.

“We found a local guy who was really keen on thermal solar and PV and he went and retrofitted all these places and sorted them out, and also did new installations when we wanted them, because we found some people who could afford to put in thermal solar or PV.” West Midlands Rural Volunteers

4.2 Home Energy Advice Visit Process

4.2.1 Arranging visit and preparation

Each visit started with a householder being recruited somehow (see Recruitment section later) and an appointment being made for a visit. Several projects reported that this was often a highly time consuming process, with many appointments not kept.

“You send them an email, saying give me some dates please and I'll find some volunteers, they don't reply, you chase them up and they still don't reply, you ring them they don't answer their phone. So a quarter of the people who request a visit never get one because they never get around to responding. There's a lot of chasing - a lot of my time is spent matching up people's availability with volunteer's availability.” Outer London Semi-Pros

One project reported managing this issue reasonably well by repeated reminder phone calls.

“So, whereas you can usually get them tied down to, ‘we will be there at such and such a time’ and we write to them and remind them with a phone call and ring them as we're leaving type thing. We've actually got that quite well, so we don't have a lot of drop-outs on home visits.” South West Urban Specialists

Most projects reported that they asked householders to prepare in advance by having recent utility bills ready. Householders receiving a thermal imaging visit were often asked to warm up the house, so as to create a sufficient temperature differential for the camera to work effectively.

4.2.2 Visit duration

Interviewees reported that the home visit would last anything from 45 minutes to 2 hours. Several interviewees observed that concentration starts to wane beyond an hour, meaning that a follow-up appointment is required to continue the intervention. Negotiating with an energy supplier was reported by several interviewees as significantly increasing the interview time.

“An hour and a half is about right. After that their concentration does wane.”
Outer London Semi-Pros

“A visit probably takes at least an hour and a half, we allow two hours.” West
Midlands Urban Council

“A learning point from this project is that if somebody has run up fuel debt quite often that can be an hour with the client actually sorting that out.” South
West Urban Specialists

We find that if we're hitting two hours, then the customer's head has gone, and ours has gone, and we need to do a secondary visit.” West Midlands Urban
Specialists

4.2.3 Number of advisors

Interviewees reported that either one or two people undertook each visit. This was typically one person where a paid staff member delivered the advice, except when volunteers were shadowing or supporting. Some of the volunteer-run projects used two advisors to aid learning or provide practical help with recording thermal images.

“Now on our projects normally we would have a paid advisor and a volunteer.” South West Urban Specialists

“It's just one of us that goes out these days. Initially we found that two of us going out was a good thing to do because it gave us confidence, but it wasn't long before we thought, we can do this by ourselves.” East Midlands Rural Volunteers

4.2.4 From checklist to client-led approaches

The majority of projects used some sort of checklist to focus the advisors attention on key issues (e.g. heating controls, insulation), but tailored their visit around the particular issues presented by the house and householders.

“We found that it's very important when you write a report and interact with the householder that it's tailored very much to that specific relationship, so we didn't want to force the householder as it were to a certain number of boxes to tick.” East Midlands Rural Volunteers

The two semi-professional projects had a stronger focus on a methodical “audit” approach, in both cases because the data collected during the visit would be used to generate a report for the householder.

“We have a two page checklist... and it asks questions about the building, its size and age and occupancy, we ask them about their heating systems and energy usage, insulation, lighting, appliances and water.” Outer London Semi-Pros

“The survey goes through: the construction of the property, the levels of insulation, the type of heating system, secondary heating system, the fuels used, lighting, cooking. And we also do a carbon footprint survey.” West Midlands Rural Semi-Pros

At the other extreme, the West Midlands Urban Specialists and South West Urban Specialists emphasised their client-led approach.

“You'd have to meet them where they're at first. That's partly because if people have contacted you because they've got damp, and you're suddenly wanting to talk to them about how they leave the lights on, they're not going to engage.” South West Urban Specialists

4.3 Follow-up activities

Follow-up work took a range of forms: from handyman visits being done, further advice from the lead organisation or partners, the collection of any loaned equipment, delivering energy advice reports or evaluation surveys.

For those providing reports, some contacted householders again to discuss the recommendations in detail, while others discretely delivered the report for the householder to use as they wish.

Those making evaluation phone calls often found that this triggered further advice needs.

“And what we found was some people were coming back of their own accord. We also found that when we started doing some evaluation calls that that was when people would then start saying that they’d got other problems.”

South West Urban Specialists

Several projects reported that they would do as much follow-up visiting and case work as was needed to help the client. This also included checking that referrals for work to be done have been carried out.

“And depending on circumstances we will do multiple visits to a property if that’s required. That’s very often required more for the people in fuel poverty where maybe there are complex issues; they’ve already had their gas disconnected, there are billing issues and things like that.”

Scotland Rural Specialists

“If we’ve referred somebody to [the] council there’s a brought-forward system where we follow it up if they haven’t heard from them in a reasonable time.”

Scotland Rural Specialists

5 How Projects are Delivered

This section describes how the case study projects were delivered, covering Organisational Models; Financial Models; Staffing and Volunteers; Reaching Householders; and Contextual Influences on delivery.

5.1 Organisational Models

5.1.1 Long-term service versus short-term projects

The majority of the six professional projects interviewed were trying to provide a long-term energy advice service to householders in their local area. Exceptions were the North West Urban Social Housing project, which was offering a one-off service to a housing association, and the South West Urban Specialists project, which was targeting advice at a particular community (although in the context of trying to provide a service through its wider range of projects).

The projects providing a service shared the outlook of providing a service for all, but also trying to prioritise uptake amongst the most vulnerable residents in the local community.

“The Energy Advice Service is for everybody in the borough, every resident. It’s for every age group, so anyone can have the service, we promote it and try and obviously reach the most vulnerable” West Midlands Urban Council

The two semi-professional projects each aspired to provide a service year-on-year, but were struggling to do so due to lack of funding.

The four voluntary projects appeared to be shorter term initiatives, and had either ceased (in three cases) or were running on greatly reduced numbers (in one case).

5.1.2 Geographical Scale

This was rarely discussed explicitly, but the need for delivery on a local scale was often implicit in discussions around transportation and models of delivery.

“It’s just the travelling distance that makes a nonsense, you know, to go out there and do one visit, the travelling time.” Scotland Rural Specialists

5.1.3 Seasonality of work

All projects reported a peak of activity in winter, with either all or the majority of home visits taking place at that time. Several projects highlighted that non-winter activity was also useful, such as tariff switching, following up referrals to ensure work had been done and securing funding for the coming winter’s work.

“We now continually work through the summer and hopefully we’ll be able to carry on doing visits over the summer as well.” West Midlands Urban Council

As a result staffing and volunteering levels also varied seasonally, with greater workload in winter.

5.1.4 Local Authority Relationships

Local authorities emerged as key stakeholders in the majority of the professional projects and to some extent in the semi-professional and voluntary projects.

Where a project was run within a local authority, a key issue was internal support for funding the service, whether from officers or councillors.

“I think the other social care and preventative services see how important it is, so it’s all so highly thought of!” West Midlands Urban Council

“It’s a big corporate priority for us and hopefully will continue to be.” Inner London Council

A professional project delivered within a local authority highlighted that this position made it easier to develop the required relationships to provide support for fuel poor households.

“I think I would just say one of the other benefits of being part of local government and delivering these projects is that we already have a lot of the ready-made relationships with the NHS, with other social landlords, with the third sector, etcetera.” West Midlands Urban Council

Even where local authorities were not delivering an energy advice service, there was evidence of their taking a strategic view of service provision in their area.

“This was through the Steering Group and run by [the] council, we felt that there was a need for the same service throughout the whole of [the local authority area]. Scotland Rural Specialists

Some of the voluntary groups reported that recent cuts to local authority funding had impaired their ability to play this role.

“We have engaged with the local authorities. [The] Council were quite good at bringing the voluntary sector together at times but they’ve had such savage cut-backs that there’s almost no staff left.” West Midlands Rural Volunteers

5.1.5 Installers and Utilities

With the exception of the two professional local authority projects, there was no evidence of partnership working with installers or with utility companies (save for calling them on behalf of householders).

“We do work with EON to offer free loft and cavity wall insulation.” West Midlands Urban Council

“We’re the only organisation in the UK referring people to all of the main suppliers.” Inner London Council

The need for providing impartial, independent advice was cited by those not engaging with installers.

“We’ve been offered money from installers and things but obviously they wanted something in return for that and we wouldn’t accept it.” Scotland Rural Specialists

Two of the voluntary projects reported that they shared recommended installers with householders. The Handyman role within the West Midlands Rural Volunteers project was a slightly ambiguous exception to this rule, securing, as he did, extra work beyond the grant funded day through being signposted by the project.

5.1.6 Other Partnerships

On a formal basis some of the other partnerships reported involved joint working to deliver energy advice visits (e.g. being invited in by non-energy specialist organisations), or in the case of Scotland Rural Specialists, joint working with three other voluntary sector organisations to deliver energy advice across an entire local authority area.

On a more informal basis, personal champions within partner organisations were reported as having a positive impact, such as healthcare workers contacting colleagues to recommend referral to the West Midlands Urban Council energy advice service. This reflected a current situation where referrals amongst healthcare professionals were reliant on individual initiative at present.

“The health professionals that make referrals to us are the individual people that know us, not an over-arching system.” West Midlands Urban Specialists

5.2 Financial Models

5.2.1 Funding overview

The quantity and source of funding for the projects considered in this research is shown in Table 5.

Where figures didn’t come up in the interviews, turnover is estimated based upon staffing levels and costs of comparable projects.

Table 5: Turnover and Funding Sources

Case Study	Case Study Nickname	Approx. Turnover	Funding Source
1	East Midlands Urban Volunteers	Low hundreds	Extra cost within wider project
2	Outer London Semi-Pros	£10,000	Grants
3	West Midlands Rural Semi-Pros	£1,000	Grants and visit fees
4	West Midlands Rural Volunteers	Inactive	Was grants
5	North West Urban Social Housing	Tens of thousands	Housing association
6	West Midlands Urban Council	£100,000	Internal local authority funding, and £25,000 from public health
7	Yorkshire Urban Area Volunteers	Inactive	Was local council grant.
8	Inner London Council	£130,000	Internal local authority funding and public health
9	East Midlands Rural Volunteers	Low hundreds	Was grants
10	West Midlands Urban Specialists	£200,000	Grants and local authority service agreements (18 streams)
11	South West Urban Specialists	Tens of thousands	Grants and some local authority service agreements
12	Scotland Rural Specialists	Tens of thousands	Grants

The figures show that the voluntary projects have relied upon securing grant funding to go ahead. This is also largely the case for most of the professional projects, except where local authority funding for service provision enables work to go ahead. Few long-term grants were reported – most were for one year or less, and the longest-term grant reported was for three years.

The two local authority projects have funding provided internally and through public health, and although in each case it is reviewed and renewed annually, they both are confident of securing funding for the year ahead.

For all of the projects employing staff, this was reported as the main project cost. The exception to this was the Outer London Semi-Pros project, which delivered visits using volunteers and had a small staff team in the background, for whom spending on equipment to install during visits (at £55 per visit) was as much of a cost.

In terms of the cost per home visit, two of the projects employing paid staff independently reported a figure of £120.

“So obviously the figure covers the labour and the materials and the management costs or whatever. It’s about £120 a visit.” North West Urban Social Housing

“At the moment, we’re aiming to get £120 per visit. If someone wants a unit price off me, that’s where I’d start from.” West Midlands Urban Specialists

5.2.2 Income Generation

Several projects described exploring income generation options so that they wouldn’t need to be as reliant on grant funding. None of them reported success, with the lack of resources from fuel poor households being a key barrier.

“We were a community interest company for some years in the rather mistaken notion that we could run a business that would make money. Well, we didn’t make much money. We continue to be dependent on grants and they’ve been much reduced over the last several years.” West Midlands Rural Semi-Pros

“Now we’re charging sixty quid so there aren’t many people who want to pay but there were lots of people who were willing to have one for nothing.” West Midlands Rural Semi-Pros

“Grant makers are always saying, ‘Sustainability and make it a social enterprise’ but there’s no way you can do that. It’s going to have to be grant funded because our target group do not have money to buy services, and we’re not necessarily saving them money for them to pay through savings.” South West Urban Specialists

The only exception to this story was a social enterprise partnering with Scotland Rural Specialists to offer household fuel switching advice on a free basis due to making profit elsewhere. Whether a comparable model could apply to home energy advice isn't clear.

"They do not make any money out of household switching. They make their money out of business switching, which is fine with us." Scotland Rural Specialists

5.2.3 Securing Core Funding

For the professional projects providing a local energy advice service, the need for core funding was often stressed. The interviewees highlighted three possible sources of core funding, which could be used in combination: Public Health, Local Authorities and Housing Associations.

"Public Health, they're obviously interested in the bigger picture and the impact its making and they're prepared to pay for that." West Midlands Urban Council

"Public health put in a certain amount and our own housing department put in a certain amount and my own home department put in a certain amount as well." Inner London Council

A challenge to this approach was highlighted in the form of competition from private sector energy saving installation companies, offering to engage householders free of charge in order to secure leads for work.

Where core funding for a local service was not in place, this led to some complicated management and delivery situations for project staff, where they attempt to piece together a comprehensive service from a range of geographical and householder –specific funding arrangements.

"Each funder tends to have a slightly different requirements, about different geographical areas." West Midlands Urban Specialists

"There is a bit of a complication between the two, which is why sometimes we sort of – if you like, really decide afterwards which funding stream we are dealing with the person under." Scotland Rural Specialists

"At the moment we haven't got project funding specifically for older people. So, if we're having requests from older people who don't fit under our other projects a couple of our volunteers will go and do some home visits for them." South West Urban Specialists

5.2.4 Sustaining Funding

For projects drawing upon local authority, health-related or housing association funding, continued funding relied upon evidence of impacts and the support of the bodies in question.

“We’ve had political support, which has also been invaluable because ultimately it’s elected members that are agreeing the budget every year.”

Inner London Council

For most of the voluntary and semi-professional projects interviewed, there were many attempts to secure grant funding described, but frequent challenges to do so. Failure to secure funding led to the decision to end the West Midlands Rural Volunteers project, and is threatening the existence of the West Midlands Rural Semi-Pros initiative.

“We don’t really know how long we can survive at the moment. As I said, we’re using up reserves and there isn’t much left.” West Midlands Rural Semi-Pros

“When the grant dried up we decided to stop it.” West Midlands Rural Volunteers

5.3 Staffing and Volunteers

5.3.1 Project Teams

Each of the case study projects has a project team of less than ten people. For the voluntary groups, typical numbers would be 3 to 5, with one or two members providing leadership. For staffed projects a team of three or more part-time staff was typical, with hours increasing in the winter to fit with an increased workload.

“There’s a team of about five of us, all caseworkers, who all answer the telephone.” West Midlands Urban Council

“Over the winter months we employed one advisor for six months, a second advisor for four months, but then they can bring in extra advisers when we’re sending out mailshots or it’s suddenly a cold spell.” West Midlands Urban Council

For the specialist charity organisations and semi-professional projects, interviewees frequently reported that staff would continue to work as volunteers to manage shortfalls in funding.

“I was one of the paid staff, a local co-ordinator. And that finished in November 2011, so I haven’t had paid work since then.” West Midlands Rural Semi-Pros

“I work full-time; my level of pay varies with the funding... anything from two days a week to full-time” Scotland Rural Specialists

5.3.2 Project Team Demographics

There were noticeable age and gender differences between the team members involved in different types of project. For the six professional organisations, the interviewees were three women and four men, ranging from early to late middle age. For the voluntary and semi-professional projects, all the project organisers with one exception were male and retired or semi-retired, although several women were also involved in these projects in other roles.

For project volunteers, there involvement frequently drew upon their professional skills and interests.

“We have retired or semi-retired engineers, or physicists and so on, who have an enormous amount of knowledge and enthusiasm.” Outer London Semi-Pros

“I’m a civil engineer and I’ve done lots of building work.” West Midlands Rural Volunteers

“Generally speaking the background of people we have is one of being pretty well educated, and successful in their careers.” East Midlands Rural Volunteers

Some of the younger project volunteers were young professionals seeking experience in their chosen field.

“A lot of our younger assessors, English isn't there first language, many are from Spain, Portugal, Mexico, Italy - people who can't get work in their own country [despite] good qualifications.” Outer London Semi-Pros

5.3.3 Energy-related Knowledge Needs

An issue highlighted at the outset of this research was the question of to what extent volunteers have the knowledge and skills required to deliver effective energy advice.

Across all of the projects, this issue was managed by some sort of training and knowledge development process. For all of the professional projects, it was a rule that anyone conducting a visit must have an energy advice professional qualification. One interviewee described a motive for this stance:

“We've sort of learned that the hard way, one that really comes to mind, there was a question and answer session at the end of a large project... and one of the chaps... he'd gone all the way through a volunteer project and started giving some detailed commentary from the floor about a particular facet of advice. And he was completely wrong, but you couldn't tell if you didn't know what you were listening to. And we're really cautious about making sure that sort of thing doesn't happen.” West Midlands Urban Specialists

With the exception of Yorkshire Urban Area Volunteers, all of the voluntary and semi-professional projects used unqualified volunteers to deliver visits. Training was provided in most of these cases, either internally or through a project support worker, of between two and ten hours. Interviewees also stressed the value of learning on the job by shadowing more experienced assessors during home visits. Several of the voluntary group members suggested that general building knowledge was sufficient to deliver a basic level of advice.

“You don't need DIY skills, but you do need a bit of common sense about how a building is constructed, how its insulated how its heated, so we're not plumbers, we're not electricians, we're not builders, but we need a little background in those areas.” Outer London Semi-Pros

“I'm a jack of all trades, I can talk at many levels, but I'm not an expert at any level, I can't give them the definitive answer always, but I can find someone who knows if they're keen on finding out.” East Midlands Urban Volunteers

The West Midlands Rural Semi-Pros project managed this issue by using volunteers to collect data on a home visit that was sent to a qualified professional for analysis to make a report.

“We don't think we need to because, as I said, that's there in the background.” West Midlands Rural Semi-Pros

Two voluntary project volunteers did report that they sometimes struggled to help when faced with unusual energy systems. However this is not just an issue of qualifications, as one of those volunteers had gained the City and Guilds energy advice qualification, so this also related to experience and familiarity with particular technologies.

One professional project argued that it is beneficial for any handyman employed to also be qualified.

“The handyman is also an energy advisor so again it means that he is aware, because very often when you go out to people and you say you are here to fit draughts they want you to cover up a vent or something, which is there for a very good reason.” Scotland Rural Specialists

A local authority project worker made the point that access to more skilled technical support can be beneficial.

“We have a team of technical officers because we're a home improvement service and sometimes you have to send those in to be looking at damp, and even the energy advisors that go out, it's difficult for them sometimes to establish is it condensation or is it damp?” West Midlands Urban Council

Also relevant for debates around professionalisation was a comment from the West Midlands Rural Volunteers project, pointing to the idea that a voluntary project is a different entity and perhaps needs judging under different criteria.

“It's got to be professional enough for people to know they're getting something that's got serious thought behind it, but it's got to be amateurish enough to know that they're being cared for in a different way...The minute you over-formalise it you're in dead trouble. West Midlands Rural Volunteers

5.3.4 Other Knowledge, Skills and Personal Traits

A consistent picture emerged from all of the projects interviewed of the kind of person who would be well-suited to an energy advice role. Respondents mentioned rapport, friendliness, motivation to help, listening skills and empathy with vulnerable people. Building trust during the interaction was highlighted by several people as an important skill to facilitate engagement around fuel poverty issues.

“They’re very good at normalising debt and waiting for the right time in the conversation, once you’ve been with somebody an hour, so it might take an hour/an hour and a half for them to open up.” West Midlands Urban Council

“The key thing is the person’s got to be either interested in the people or interested in the house. It’s about treating this situation as unique really, walking in and this is a unique house.” West Midlands Rural Volunteers

Despite these commonalities, several respondents also stated that a blend of diverse skills and experience across a team was also beneficial.

5.3.5 Learning Processes

Interviewees reported a range of formal and informal learning processes once on the job, from informal discussion with project team members after visits to keeping a database of unusual heating systems observed in houses. Partnering inexperienced volunteers with more experienced staff or volunteers was a commonly used learning strategy.

Knowledge maintenance also took place around policy changes and funding opportunities, through the networks, email lists and meetings of partner organisations.

“We’ve got a big [Citizens Advice Bureau] and they run lunchtime briefings on benefits topics. So we’ve usually got an adviser going to that, coming back with benefits awareness that we share.” West Midlands Urban Specialists

“We do we have sort of regular meetings and we would discuss cases in a careful way, without necessarily giving the personal details.” Scotland Rural Specialists

5.3.6 Role of Community Volunteers

For team members working on professional or semi-professional projects, there is a question around the role played by volunteers, either in giving advice or other issues relating to the project.

Relating to the idea expressed above, that a basic level of knowledge can be enough for providing basic advice, some projects suggested a role along these lines for volunteers.

“The idea wasn’t so much that the volunteers do home visits, the idea was that they did events within the community, and they could help people within the community by giving basic energy advice, basic fuel bill advice, but also to refer to us for anything more detailed.” West Midlands Urban Specialists

A related idea to this is that volunteers can be “facilitators” within a community, signposting to a service or perhaps sitting in on advice visits if this makes the householder(s) receiving the visit more comfortable.

“We did have volunteers. But rather than them being signed up and coming on training courses in energy efficiency and really getting into the energy

angle, by and large they ended up being facilitators into their community.

Apart from one.” South West Urban Specialists

This latter point, that very few volunteers would have the interest and confidence to move beyond a facilitation role towards being an advisor was backed up by staff from two other professional projects.

“We tried to train energy champions from voluntary groups, and we managed to train around eight, but when it came down to it none of them were confident or skilled enough to do the energy advice side of things. Scotland Rural Specialists

“Yeah, there is a role there but they are few and far between and finding people who are really that skilled to be actually doing what we want, so that’s why we just go out to these groups and try and just focus on increasing their income to their communities, and then make referrals into us for everything else. West Midlands Urban Council

Where volunteers were assisting professional projects in a facilitation role, this was reported as having a significant impact in enabling particular communities to be reached.

“We realised that in fact having him was actually a really important part of making the project successful in reaching the Somali community.” South West Urban Specialists

“In the mental health charity that we’re working with, that’s more a case of... their users are very difficult to engage with. The way that the volunteers have introduced us, or commended us and so on, that’s broken quite a few barriers down.” West Midlands Urban Specialists

For both professional projects using volunteers as facilitators, and voluntary projects working on a very local scale, the reputation of particular individuals as go-to experts for home energy matters facilitated trust and provided a point of contact for home energy visits.

“Both of them were very embedded in the community in the sense that people knew them and they knew lots of people. I think the level of trust their built because of their local fame if you like, was quite high. They were both people who were well known.” West Midlands Rural Volunteers

“But as time went through he got a reputation locally as the man to ask about energy.” South West Urban Specialists

Widening the focus out to community organisations, referrals to professional projects from such organisations was a significant and valued way for these projects to reach a wider audience.

“We do get a lot of referrals from the third sector who are, again, reaching the people that wouldn’t necessarily talk to the council.” Inner London Council

One interviewee addressed the question of whether voluntary groups could viably provide an energy advice service in the local authority area, and felt that they wouldn’t be able to make a large enough impact.

“It would be difficult for me to then imagine a scenario where we just left a lot of it up to volunteer groups. There’s been various ones kicking about for a while, not currently but in the past, and their reach has been pretty limited. I’m very much measured on numbers.” Inner London Council

From the other end, a member of one of the voluntary projects interviewed had received the same impression from the project’s local authority.

*“Because the number of houses we did is small in their mind, they never really took it seriously as something they could support and make a difference to.”
West Midlands Rural Volunteers*

5.3.7 Volunteer involvement issues

For both professional and entirely volunteer-run projects, the issue of how volunteers are recruited and retained can affect the viability of delivery models.

Several interviewees highlighted the need for volunteers to be motivated to take part, in particular to lead and develop voluntary projects.

“It’s a motivating activity, I enjoy doing it, and I’m using my old skills.” Outer London Semi-Pros

“What we have found is that you need somebody who’s got the energy and commitment and time to actually push something through.” East Midlands Rural Volunteers

The risk of over-reliance on these individuals and the challenge of replacing them if they withdraw was raised in several interviews, with delegation being suggested as a strategy to mitigate the risk. Several instances were reported of changes in volunteers’ personal circumstances (e.g. moving away, getting married), leading to their withdrawal from the project, and contributing in two cases to the cessation of activity.

For professional projects, two interviewees discussed how volunteers they had identified within partner organisations were reluctant to extend their voluntary commitment beyond their existing role, making a facilitation viable but not a more active energy champion role.

When asked about how they sustain their activity, interviewees from several voluntary and semi-professional projects pointed to mutual group loyalty as a key factor in keeping them active.

“With grim determination, I should say! And some sort of belief in what we’re doing and mutual support amongst the group who’ve kept the show going.”

West Midlands Rural Semi-Pros

5.4 Reaching Householders

Reaching householders, and fuel poor householders in particular, is a key challenge for any project seeking to provide home energy advice. This section summarises the methods used to reach householders so that they agree to receive a home energy advice visit.

5.4.1 Summary of methods used

The main methods reported by each of the case study projects and the number of visits carried out in each case is shown in Table 6.

Table 6: Summary of Methods Used to recruit householders

Case Study	Case Study Nickname	Methods Used	No. households visited
1	East Midlands Urban Volunteers	Members network and door knocking	Approx. 50 over 3 years
2	Outer London Semi-Pros	Stalls	Approx. 70
3	West Midlands Rural Semi-Pros	Events and Stalls in past. Now website only.	1800 in total. Around 10 expected in 14/15
4	West Midlands Rural Volunteers	Talks, film showings, through community groups, articles in local magazine. Now dormant.	20 to 150 per year depending on delivery mechanism. Now dormant.
5	North West Urban Social Housing	Telemarketing company	295 visits in one year
6	West Midlands Urban Council	Targeted mail-outs, referral network, adverts in free papers	Approx. 600 per year
7	Yorkshire Urban Area Volunteers	Leaflets and posters	6 in total.
8	Inner London Council	Targeted mail-outs, referral network	8,500 in total. Approx. 1,000 per year.
9	East Midlands Rural Volunteers	Social networks, talks, stalls, through community groups	Approx. 100 in total, now around 6 per year
10	West Midlands Urban Specialists	Freephone number, thermometer card, referral network, targeted mail-outs, related support projects	500 per year
11	South West Urban Specialists	Social network of community volunteers, website, phone line, from related support projects	Unknown
12	Scotland Rural Specialists	Referral network, stalls	Unknown

Although in two cases data were not collected, this picture points to a significant difference between professional and other projects, with visits measured in hundreds rather than tens. The following sections also look beyond quantity into who was recruited for visits and how.

5.4.2 Referral Networks

Strong referral networks appeared to be one of the principal factors behind the quantity of home visits arranged by professional projects, and the extent to which they reached those in fuel poverty. These networks typically comprised local authority teams, health organisations (e.g. GP surgeries, hospitals) and voluntary sector organisations (such as Age UK, Alzheimer's Society or the Citizens Advice Bureau).

“Well we have 132 teams in 86 organisations making referrals to us within the council and 85 others.” Inner London Council

“The links that we’ve got with all social care, NHS, CCG, Public Health, to actually be able to get a foot in the door and to reach those most vulnerable, most at risk of fuel poverty. West Midlands Urban Council

“We get referrals from doctors, from social workers, we also have, get referrals from Food Banks and the various organisations that we deal with trying to keep people in their home.” Scotland Rural Specialists

Several projects reported that this referral network needed constant maintenance, through outreach visits, newsletters, etc., or referral numbers would drop off.

“When you’ve done an organisation, within a few months they’ve kind of forgotten you again and it’s a case of drip-feeding them constantly and reminding them, so we’ll send out a lot of e-shots, just reminding them about the service”. West Midlands Urban Council

Specific techniques reported that helped to build a strong referral network were getting high-level buy in from within a referral partner organisation, and needing a very simple referral process (just sharing name and contact details).

“In the first year there was a long referral form and I think we got two referrals in!” West Midlands Urban Council

In turn, as part of a local referral network for vulnerable people, those projects that were part of such a network reported making referrals and identifying referral needs as part of their energy advice visits.

“The caseworkers are very much looking to do a full needs assessment with every single person we deal with, so we make hundreds of ongoing referrals for any service that they may require. West Midlands Urban Council

Could voluntary groups also participate in a local referral network and reap the same benefits in terms of reaching more vulnerable community members? There was evidence from several projects of similar partnerships being sought (e.g. groups contacting hospital drivers for referrals, or a joint funding proposal with a Citizens Advice Bureau), but no evidence of participation in local area referral networks.

5.4.3 Marketing Techniques

As Table 6 illustrates, a range of marketing techniques were used by the case study projects.

Leaflets were a common tool, with mail-outs employed by projects associated with local authorities (targeting, for example, the elderly or people on low-incomes, drawing upon data held by the local authority). Views on their impact differed sharply:

“We know what doesn't work. For example leaflets don't work. Or articles in newspapers.” Outer London Semi-Pros

“We also piloted a mailing through a couple of GP's surgeries to their patients... who are over 65 with multiple long term health conditions. And that's happening at the moment so I don't have any data on it, but we've had a stream of calls coming through.” Inner London Council

“Probably our mailshots. If you're talking volume of numbers, then mail shots. We get a list from council tax of anyone who's on a council tax reduction and... I think this winter we've sent out about 6000 mailshots... and they bring in a huge surge of referrals.” West Midlands Urban Council

This points to something about these differing contexts leading to a difference in response rate – although whether that is to do with the recipients, messaging, or other factors is unclear. The West Midlands Urban Council interviewee suggested that mailshots are particularly effective for the over 80s.

Sending targeted mail-outs raises questions of data access and sharing, which were discussed by many interviewees. For the two local authority projects, access to data on local residents was relatively simple (although stronger data on households outside of social housing was still seen as a need), but for other projects legal and administrative issues often prevent the sharing of data for targeted mail-outs.

Telemarketing proved highly effective at signing up residents for home visits in the North West Urban Social Housing Project. The telemarketing firm was employed by a housing association to phone its tenants to make appointments for energy advice visits, and in most cases was able to do so.

Door stepping was reported as successful in several cases (e.g. West Midlands Rural Semi-Pros reported a 50% success rate in arranging advice visits), although one projects found it very challenging to summarise their offer in a short interaction, leading to a low take-up.

For voluntary projects, community events such as stalls, public talks and film showings were commonly used to recruit people for home visits.

A marketing tool reported as having a highly positive impact was the large thermometer card employed by West Midlands Urban Specialists.

“They're very popular and you'll go into people's houses, and they've got thermometer cards that are up that are 4,5,6 years out of date. So it actually helps them to keep our number. And they won't have phoned for 2 or 3 years,

and then they suddenly have a problem, and they've got the thermometer card and they ring us.” West Midlands Urban Specialists

Existing project and social networks were another common approach, used for example by East Midlands Urban Volunteers, East Midlands Rural Volunteers and Outer London Semi-Pros.

“Initially, members of our groups had friends who we thought might be interested, and we approached them directly and said would you like a survey?” East Midlands Rural Volunteers

Another issue raised was the need to have some sort of hook to start a dialogue with someone (e.g. a water poverty intervention) which could then lead to a referral to energy advice.

5.4.4 Self-referral and Trigger Points

Although it was a relatively smaller source of sign-ups, many projects also discussed how members of the public self-refer for support, or are inspired to ask for help after being triggered by particular circumstances at home.

For fuel poor homes, the issues cited included debt and damp problems

“Usually it was because they had some sort of a crisis or problem.” West Midlands Rural Volunteers

“I suppose within that population it tended to be either they had fuel debt or they were having a billing problem of some description – that could be it’s not a debt yet but they’ve just suddenly had a really high bill which they weren’t expecting. Or a lot of it is stuff driven by damp and condensation.” South West Urban Specialists

Related to this issue were the establishment of parallel activities to home advice, such as crisis support (e.g. heater loans) which could also provide referrals.

“So we've got a number of projects that are deliberately set up to generate energy advice episodes and then we'll judge whether it should be a home visit or just a telephone call.” West Midlands Urban Specialists

A high local profile and good reputation were also discussed by many projects, both for the project as a whole and, for community-level delivery, for individuals with a reputation for energy expertise.

“We've had an 0800 number now for 14, 15 years, so on our home patch, we're extremely well known.” West Midlands Urban Specialists

“I think we are certainly known in the area, I think we're respected and we have built up a good web of relationships.” East Midlands Rural Volunteers

5.4.5 Role of Trust

Trust was identified in the literature as a key issue affecting the ability of projects to reach householders. The issue was only spontaneously raised by a minority of interviewees, and when raised, it manifested in a number of different ways:

Trust to engage with the project

Interviewees reported that this was stronger for local authorities, housing associations, or projects running under their auspices (such as the North West Urban Social Housing project).

“It makes it a lot easier being local authority, without a doubt. A lot of people will phone up and the first question they’ll ask, they want confirmation if we’re local authority before they’ll even engage with us.” West Midlands Urban Council

“We’ve found a number of the things that we’re doing, local authority endorsement is really valuable. Everybody has a go at the local authority, but at the same time, local authority endorsement is really important.” West Midlands Urban Specialists

This points to either delivery by local authorities, or local authorities playing a commissioning role with other agencies (such as specialist charities) delivering energy advice. One interviewee raised an issue that would weaken the former approach, where a short-term political change (the bedroom tax) quickly undermined trust in the local authority amongst many of their target population.

Trust through community connections

This manifested in the South West Urban Specialists project, where a local Somali volunteer embedded within that local community facilitated access for home visits.

Trust through brand awareness

This was reported by two of the specialist charities who each had a strong and long-standing presence in their local area.

“I think there is a trust there in that they know who we are.” South West Urban Specialists

Trust to share personal information

Data sharing was an issue highlighted by many, and one local authority interviewee pointed to more robust processes within local authorities and a risk that smaller community groups may not engender the same trust.

“I think people are more worried when it comes to putting data back and forth between unofficial or small organisations.” Inner London Council

Trust to act on advice

Trust to act on energy advice was another issue raised. Alongside the personal skills required to engender trust, the backing of a professional, expert organisation was seen as being helpful in this regard.

“Whereas if it was... an expert they’re telling you the real right thing rather than just your neighbour or somebody else, one of your friends, telling you to do it a different way.” South West Urban Specialists

Distrust of information on grant funding

The frequently-changing availability of grant funding for energy efficiency measures has led to a distrust amongst some householders that advice about this is reliable.

Not trusting motives of for-profit organisations

Finally, distrust of information and advice from for-profit businesses looking to sell energy efficiency measures was cited by many interviewees. This was seen as creating a difficult context for energy advisors to operate in, through a perception that by trying to offer advice for free, there is likely to be a motive to sell something behind it.

A private company which the client suspects is trying to sell them something is probably not trusted so well.

“Compared with a private company, [local authorities] are probably rated really quite highly. West Midlands Rural Semi-Pros

“The way that fuel poverty has been privatised has really damaged that potential trust, really damaged it... the number of lead generators out there promising that they’ll do everything free... that has made our job a lot harder.” West Midlands Urban Specialists

5.5 Contextual Influences

The delivery model of each project is influenced by the context it operates in – whether that is internal (i.e. relationship to other organisations within the organisation), related to local context (e.g. prevalence of fuel poverty, demographic issues) or to national issues (e.g. policies affecting energy efficiency). This section describes a range of contextual issues for each project.

5.5.1 Related Activities of Organisation

For projects run by voluntary and semi-professional groups, the home energy advice project was typically one of several projects running in parallel related to broader themes of sustainable energy or sustainability in general.

For East Midlands Urban Volunteers, the thermal imaging home visits project developed as a spin-off from a longer-running project focussed on peer support for carbon emission reductions. Parallel projects run by community groups included wood stove knowledge sharing, promotion of cycling and collective solar PV panel purchase. For several of the non-professional projects, funding shortfalls led to time being diverted elsewhere into these other projects.

“So we moved our focus to creating a community energy co-op, putting PV panels on the local youth centre which we saved from being demolished. That’s where we put our energy last year... I think we would want to go back to home energy when the time is right.” West Midlands Rural Volunteers

“Without any funding we can't do any worthwhile home visits, but we can still do visits to schools.” Outer London Semi-Pros

In contrast, as suggested above, professional projects seeking to deliver a local service manage cuts in core funding by seeking to deliver a full service through a patchwork of grants and other funding streams.

5.5.2 Local Prevalence of Fuel Poverty

Although definitions were not provided in interviews, interviewees typically spontaneously reported their perceptions of the fuel poor and understanding of issues affecting fuel poverty in their local area.

Perceptions included those relating to dwelling type (e.g. more fuel poverty in solid walled homes or those with pre-payment meters) and tenure (e.g. greater fuel poverty in private rented or social housing).

In terms of personal characteristics and behaviour, fuel poor people were characterised as having complex needs, less organisational skills and less engagement with the local community.

“We've got to find those people, and they're relatively well-hidden because they are fuel poor. They are not quite so aware of what's around in the community. It's harder to work with people, because they have busy and rather hectic lives.” Outer London Semi-Pros

“You are dealing with humans who are not in a great place at the time and they have a lot of other issues. I mean fuel poverty is not an isolated issue; there are other things going on.” Scotland Rural Specialists

“Quite often they’re vulnerable households and more disorganised households as well.” South West Urban Specialists

Fuel poverty was seen as manifesting in a variety of ways, from under-heating of homes to over-heating followed by fuel bill debts.

“It’s mainly getting into debt, again because of that thing of we’re paying afterwards, so not thinking of going along.” South West Urban Specialists

Some of the non-professional project interviewees reported living in affluent communities with relatively little fuel poverty, whilst others described a local context which made it prevalent.

“Most of the people in [our community] are not poor. They're relatively... it's a leafy suburb, let's say, they're relatively affluent, they don't try to save energy particularly, the opposite is much more common. A home is being heated with only or two occupiers.” Outer London Semi-Pros

“[Our community] actually has one of the highest levels of fuel poverty in [our county] because we have... our demographic is very much screwed towards under-25s and over about 70... we’ve a lot of older people living in the old family home. Scotland Rural Specialists

“This is generally speaking a wealthy area, and we have a good number of retired people, and it was the elderly people who were in fact asking us to go along and survey their properties, when I say elderly I mean 50 and over.” East Midlands Rural Volunteers

5.5.3 Local housing stock

The interviewees represented both urban and rural communities, and a number of properties of the housing stock which made energy efficient refurbishment problematic were mentioned. These included planning concerns (conservation areas, listed buildings, planners’ reluctance to support solid wall insulation), a prevalence of solid-walled homes, off-gas areas, widespread storage heaters and old properties.

“Particularly challenging is the fact that we have over 60 per cent solid wall housing in the borough, over 80 per cent flats. So the typical responses of banging in some loft and cavity wall insulation don’t really apply here.” Inner London Council

“In a place like [this] there’s so many idiosyncratic houses. There’s no two houses the same except on the odd estate.” West Midlands Rural Volunteers

5.5.4 Tenure-related Issues

Housing tenure was frequently mentioned by interviewees, and in particular the private rented sector was seen as challenging in a number of ways.

“We struggle to engage with landlords and the tenants really. They just very quickly will move the tenants out and it’s a very difficult area to work in.” West Midlands Urban Council

“Our biggest weakness is reaching the private rented sector. But if the council can’t do it, I’m not sure who else can. Inner London Council

“Quite often the people we are visiting for home visits they’re not really going to be in a position to apply for grants. Particularly the Somali population they’re nearly all in rented accommodation, whether that’s social housing or private rented.” South West Urban Specialists

5.5.5 Funding available for measures

Of national-level contextual issues, the single most significant issue discussed as hampering work to improve energy efficiency and reduce fuel poverty was the lack of available funding for physical measures.

“I’m conscious that a lot of things we’re doing right now like energy doctor, the warm home discount, energy advice is just sticking plasters. Because what would really take those households out of fuel poverty, I don’t say permanently, but for a long time, would be the harder measures and we are talking about insulation.” Inner London Council

This issue is discussed further in section 7.

5.5.6 Relationship to Similar projects across UK

Interviewees were asked about their awareness of other similar projects across the UK. Two of the voluntary projects had been inspired to start by peers using a similar model elsewhere. Amongst the other projects, it was typical to only be aware of a few projects doing similar work.

“Are there other groups like us? It’d be handy to know who they are and where they are. I know there’s one in Brixton.” Outer London Semi-Pros

“We don’t really have many links with any other authorities.” West Midlands Urban Council

There was some interest in established projects offering mentoring to others. West Midlands Rural Semi-Pros had unsuccessfully applied for grant funding for a mentoring project some years previously, and West Midlands Rural Volunteers were interested in establishing a peer to peer learning project amongst community groups doing home energy advice.

5.5.7 Scaling Up Successful Approaches

Reference was made by several professional projects to the recently published NICE Guidance on preventing excess winter deaths, with this being seen as a template to roll out their successful approach.

“And the NICE guideline that came out, the recommendations are very similar to what we’ve done here. So that, in a sense, gives us a seal of approval from a very well respected organisation. I hope lots of people take it up.” Inner London Council

Evidence of scaling up professional approaches on a local level came from several of the specialist charity projects that had been invited to deliver an energy advice service for local authorities in adjoining areas.

For voluntary projects, the interviewee from West Midlands Rural Volunteers argued for funding and peer-learning support to enable grassroots projects to achieve and improve.

“If I’m putting a national policy hat on, then I would be busting a gut to get community schemes like ours scaled up, and I wouldn’t be too fussed about the particular way they did it.... I’d do it through maybe a learning intervention across the groups, bring them together and get them to talk about what they do and see if there’s any interest in picking up different bits. I’d do that sort of informal growing the learning.” West Midlands Rural Volunteers

6 Evaluation and Impacts

This section reports the evaluation activity undertaken for the case study projects and evidence of project impacts, where available.

6.1 Evaluation Methods

The case study projects drew upon a range of formal and informal evaluation methods.

- Where direct interventions were delivered (e.g. measures installed, fuel tariffs switched), then the impact was directly observable to the project team.
- Feedback on the experience of visits was also a commonly used metric, whether delivered immediately, some weeks or months later through a satisfaction survey or follow-up visit, or informally through beneficiaries bumping into project team members within the local community
- Surveys were also used in a minority of projects, typically those delivered by professional or semi-professional organisations

In addition to the research interviews, the data sources collected through the present research and available for each project are shown in Table 7.

Table 7: Project Evaluation evidence sources

Case Study	Case Study Nickname	Evidence (in addition to interview)
1	East Midlands Urban Volunteers	Online survey of beneficiaries (7 responses)
2	Outer London Semi-Pros	Online survey of beneficiaries (15 responses)
3	West Midlands Rural Semi-Pros	
4	West Midlands Rural Volunteers	
5	North West Urban Social Housing	Project Evaluation Report
6	West Midlands Urban Council	Project Evaluation Report
7	Yorkshire Urban Area Volunteers	
8	Inner London Council	Customer Satisfaction Survey
9	East Midlands Rural Volunteers	Project Case Study Report
10	West Midlands Urban Specialists	
11	South West Urban Specialists	Project Evaluation Report
12	Scotland Rural Specialists	

6.1.1 Evaluation Challenges

As table 7 implies, evaluation was a challenge for many of the case study projects, with the voluntary projects in particular undertaking few formal instances of data collection and relying mostly on informal and anecdotal information of impact.

Some of the specific challenges highlighted by interviewees include data capture and participants not responding to surveys.

“I just wish we could quantify the savings from the advice a bit more. Most of the savings that we estimate from energy doctor visits are the hard measures.” Inner London Council

“They are very [happy] to say oh it was wonderful but then when you try to actually pin them down to further information and they’ve already had the service the success there isn’t quite as high.” Scotland Rural Specialists

“I think we’re interested in getting people involved and getting them surveyed and that would have been the prime focus of it, rather than put the resources into finding out what happened afterwards.” Outer London Semi-Pros

“One of the recurring themes for us as an agency is the lack of continuing contact with clients. And quite often, once they've got what they want...” West Midlands Urban Specialists

One community group member also raised the issue that a formal evaluation process may be a poor fit with the style of engagement, echoing the previously raised concerns about the appropriate balance between professionalism and amateurism.

“And the whole thing was on a friendly basis. We didn't want to turn it into a rather officious investigation of their lifestyle.” East Midlands Rural Volunteers

6.2 Reach of the project

Table 6 detailed the number of households reached by the various case study projects. For the professional projects numbers of home visits were high, and typically, demand for visits was exceeding the available supply of staff resources.

“The biggest challenge we have is dealing with the demand being bigger than supply.” Inner London Council

In contrast, the West Midlands Rural Semi-Pros project, which reached 30% of residents in its local town during its first few years, is now struggling to recruit householders, with around 10 visits scheduled for 2014/15.

“When you first start out in a community, you can pick what we call the ‘low-hanging fruit’, the people who are motivated, interested, almost waiting for you to come along and offer this service and we had a lot of people in that category, initially, but then it became harder and harder to recruit once we got up to this 30%.” West Midlands Rural Semi-Pros

A similar pattern was observed with East Midlands Rural Volunteers, declining from around 40 visits in its first two years to around six in 2014/15.

“Demand has in fact tapered off, and we haven't done much at all, this last year, as far as surveys are concerned.” East Midlands Rural Volunteers

Both projects reported to have been reaching those that were interested and engaged with energy saving rather than those in fuel poverty. This raises the question of whether this pattern of initial interest

followed by decline may relate to those motivations for involvement, as opposed to the need for assistance with fuel poverty issues.

6.2.1 Reaching the Fuel Poor

There was a marked contrast between projects which appeared to be reaching those in fuel poverty (those run by professional staff) and the remainder. Although most projects were not collecting data on income and fuel spending to objectively evaluate fuel poverty, interviewees' subjective judgements provided an insight into the extent to which the fuel poor were being reached.

"I think the project was very effective in supporting people in general but I can't tell if any of the households I visited could be classified as fuel poverty.

Most of them were certainly not." Outer London Semi-Pros

"We don't necessarily have eligibility criteria other than they have to be vulnerable in some way." Inner London Council

"The kind of numbers we're giving you, they might not all pass Professor Hills or the 10% definition, but we would say that we're filtering unofficially to get the disadvantaged and the fuel poor." West Midlands Urban Specialists

6.2.2 Reaching Others

The voluntary projects were much stronger at reaching householders who were interested and engaged with their domestic energy use, and were looking for support to make changes.

"And it kind of confirmed all our thoughts that it was the middle class people were keener on doing it than the working class and lower income people." East Midlands Urban Volunteers

"The people who've contacted us have generally been pretty savvy on the energy front, and they've got cavity wall insulation and they've had loft insulation installed as well, and so, relatively what we were doing was confirming that they were very much on the right track." Outer London Semi-Pros

This issue was framed by the West Midlands Rural Volunteers interviewee as relating to stages of adoption of technologies.

"For me it's the old readiness curve, that the early adopters are going to do it whatever happens, and they don't even need the public meetings... but the group of people who I think we're getting to, are the ones after the early adopters, so the ones who are interested but they haven't quite got the capacity or the interest to take it all the way themselves. So they need a lot of handholding but they're not resistant to the idea." West Midlands Rural Volunteers

From this perspective the voluntary group interventions could be seen from a carbon reduction perspective as an effective way of engaging particular types of household.

6.3 Perceptions of Home Visits

6.3.1 Project Team

Project team members for virtually all of the case study projects believed that the home visits they undertook were having a positive impact.

“We’ve done some but not very much and that initial sample, which I think was done in 2009, I think it was only 33 clients. It wasn’t big enough to be statistically valid really but it did indicate that we were having quite a big impact on the people who we were helping.” West Midlands Rural Semi-Pros

“The benefit of the work is under-estimated and maybe to put a true value on the work would be the biggest thing.” Scotland Rural Specialists

The only exceptions to this picture were where constraints to the financial support available for measures were seen as a big issue (see section 7).

6.3.2 Beneficiaries

Beneficiaries provided informal feedback on the quality of visits at the end or soon after, and in many cases completed evaluation questionnaires on the same issue. The result appears to be overwhelmingly positive.

“Feedback has always been very good. We always get 9 out of 10.” Outer London Semi-Pros

“We actually see their reaction at the time, and we almost invariably bump into them at some particularly stage and we’ve gone back and had a word with them, and they’ve said that they’ve found it very helpful indeed and they’ve amended their lifestyle.” East Midlands Rural Volunteers

For the London Semi-Pros project, evaluation report data indicated that approximately 90% of householders would recommend a home energy advice visit to another resident.

6.4 Impacts

6.4.1 Financial Savings

Financial savings were the most commonly used measure of impact by all of the projects. Some of the projects were able to present specific figures:

- Outer London Semi-Pros: For each visit, spent £55 on equipment, leading to an expected average annual saving of £65 (based upon Energy Saving Trust figures)
- West Midlands Urban Specialists: £176,000 in savings over three years, based upon tariff changes, Warm Homes Discount and measures paid for. Not counting behaviour change impacts.
- Inner London Council: Saving residents £700,000 a year, compared to project cost of £130,000. Not counting hard to quantify benefits in terms of improved health.

For some interventions, in particular those around managing fuel debt through arranging regular payments, this would not lead to a perception of financial savings.

“We also had a problem during that period – in fact even without the price rises – people’s perception was that their bills had gone up.” South West Urban Specialists

For voluntary projects, the evidence of financial savings due to tariff switching was more anecdotal

“And we do know people who did switch as a result of that.” East Midlands Rural Volunteers

6.4.2 Carbon Savings

Only one interviewee had calculated a figure for carbon savings (8,100 tonnes saved through Inner London Council), but it was highlighted that this metric was not used within the local authority to measure success.

Several respondents highlighted that following the fuel poverty agenda might not lead to carbon savings, if energy use increases in a home that is easier to keep warm or where residents are better off.

For the projects working in wealthier areas, carrying out interventions would be likely to lead to some carbon savings. Actions taken include draught proofing measures installed by Outer London Semi-Pros, some insulation measures through East Midlands Urban Volunteers and a range of tailored insulation measures through West Midlands Rural Volunteers.

Evidence of these impacts is unfortunately largely anecdotal.

“I think there was probably quite a few like that that people either in conversation or when we met them later, said they’d done this or that.” East Midlands Urban Volunteers

“When they did a follow up set of phone calls with all the people they went to, they found that a high proportion of people had done something, which was good news.” West Midlands Rural Volunteers

“We did a re-survey of existing clients at a fairly early stage and we found that people were making big reductions in carbon emissions and in particular they had reduced their flying. West Midlands Rural Semi-Pros

The online surveys sent out to beneficiaries from East Midlands Urban Volunteers and Outer London Semi-Pros recorded actions taken during or after visits. The latter survey largely recorded the measures undertaken during the visit. The results of the former survey are shown in Table 8, indicating a range of insulation measures from the minor to potentially more significant.

Table 8: Measures Installed after thermal imaging visit

Measures Installed
I sealed under my external door frames. We have re-insulated the eaves. If we use the central heating, we turn it on hotter, for less time. We put a foil backing to the curtain of our French windows, but since then have stopped using it. We tuck our curtains behind the radiators, or curl them up onto the window sills.
None.
Secondary glazing installed. Draught proofing around doors and using a draft excluder at the bottom of the door.
Insulated a door that had been blocked up, however still a small area at the top that would need external insulation. Old PVC windows at back of house replaced. Study floor insulated. Attempted draught exclusion of door.
We made changes but it was not due to the visit, they were already planned - but the images backed up our ideas about what needed doing (external wall insulation). Would like to repeat thermal imaging to monitor the change
Used it to find the gaps left behind when the cavity walls were filled, and rang the company to come and make good.
I added thick plastic film double glazing to some windows and added thermal insulation to a set of curtains. I also had an area of flat roof insulated.

6.4.3 Health Impacts

Claims for health benefits are hard to back up by direct observation, and are likely to be more reliant upon published evidence of relationships between cold housing and ill health, and data collected on improving housing for those whose health is vulnerable to poor housing conditions.

“Quite often we're measuring the difference made to health by the condition they present when we make the visit, and the impact we've had on them. West Midlands Urban Council

“We do twice yearly customer satisfaction surveys and people are actually reporting that yes their homes are warmer”. Inner London Council

6.4.4 Other Beneficial Impacts

Some of the other beneficial impacts reported included improved community cohesion in a small rural town and reassurance for householders that they are doing the right things to keep warm.

This is a very good social exercise, it's brought the community closer together. And it's a very nice feeling when you do see these particular people. East Midlands Rural Volunteers

“But some are just really easy, they just want confirmation that they're doing everything right. In that case we're just in and out.” West Midlands Urban Specialists

7 Project Team Reflections

This final section of responses from case study projects highlights some of the key issues raised when participants were invited to reflect upon the strengths, weaknesses and limitations of their projects.

7.1 Tailored Home visits are effective

Whether targeting fuel poverty or carbon reduction, interviewees were all convinced that a tailored approach to energy advice was highly effective. This was seen as a marked contrast to energy performance certificate assessments, which lacked the nuanced understanding of homes, residents and their inter-relationships.

“We’re doing things like teaching people how to use their central heating properly or how to turn their night storage heaters up and down that’s much better done in situ where you can see their heating system and you can also advise them what temperature to set their thermostat at. South West Urban Specialists

“We’re about the property but also about how people use it, so we’re quite different from an energy performance certificate survey, which disregards the people and their lifestyles; we combine the two things.” Outer London Semi-Pros

7.2 Depth versus Breadth

The trade-off between depth and breadth in home energy advice was observed by several respondents, particularly those that had experience different delivery models (some with less time engaging with householders).

“It’s a double-edged sword isn’t it, being able to make so many visits partly because we’ve squeezed six or seven appointments in the day but then the downside of that is that those people that we visit where we could spend more time because of the different issues that come up and the desire for the tenants for us to respond to them appropriately.” North West Urban Social Housing

“The downside was that people were left with something which was less specific and required more effort from them, and my guess was that only the keen ones would make a difference. It’s difficult to know, but that’s my guess. West Midlands Rural Volunteers

7.3 Reaching and helping the fuel poor

As discussed previously, a strong local referral network was seen by those projects employing it as a great asset for reaching the fuel poor. This issue linked with questions of scale of impact, which the professional projects were achieving and which they questioned whether volunteer-run projects could achieve.

“If you’re in an area where nothing is happening, maybe you’re quite happy with just a few dozen home visits being carried out. In the context of what we’re doing at the moment and what we’ve done in the past few years, that’s just not feasible.” Inner London Council

Voluntary projects reported as a weakness their struggle to reach the fuel poor.

“Yes, and what we haven't managed to do is get through to the people that we really want to help.” East Midlands Rural Volunteers

In contrast, a professional project observed the success of using embedded community volunteers to reach relatively poor ethnic minority households.

“So, I think that’s what we learnt was that it’s actually having somebody based, living within the community, socialising within the community where there was big need, that that did work.” South West Urban Specialists

7.4 Insecurity of funding

For the professional projects seeking to provide a long-term local service, insecurity of funding and lack of core project funding were two major challenges highlighted.

“When you start losing the core funding and you still want to get the same penetration to a group of villages or one city, but no one's paying you... they might be paying you to take 200 telephone calls from [here], but no one's paying you to take any calls from the suburbs that lie in the next district. At that point, offering a consistent reliable service year by year becomes really difficult.” West Midlands Urban Specialists

“The weakness is insecurity of funding; you know, we need funding to keep going so that is our biggest weakness. It is the constant uncertainty.” Scotland Rural Specialists

The requested antidote to this situation was long-term funding for advice work.

“I think it would be a long-term commitment, financial commitment to fund our advice work. And without tying it to specific groups so that we can meet demand as necessary, rather than, as we’ve been discussing, trying to shoehorn it into different project objectives.” South West Urban Specialists

“What makes a difference is having adequate and reliable funding and that’s what’s missing... So it seems the talents of the voluntary sector haven’t been properly recognised and funded.” West Midlands Rural Semi-Pros

“Longer term consistent funding. Projects that come and go in six months are a devil.” West Midlands Urban Specialists

7.5 Lack of funding for measures

The second key challenge reported by interviewees was the lack of funding available for energy efficiency measures needed in their local area. This was seen as preventing the projects from making a significant impact on fuel poverty.

“Solid walls are a big problem and we’ve dabbled a bit with a bit of external wall insulation, but it means there’s such a shortfall for people who are in vulnerable homes, they tend to be in fuel poverty and they can’t afford the shortfall that’s required.” West Midlands Urban Council

“What would really make a dent in fuel poverty in my borough is having funding to do the hard to treat measures.” Inner London Council

The Green Deal assessment process and associated grant/loan funding was discussed with interviewees, none of whom believed that it held much potential to help fuel poor households.

“The vulnerable people we’re dealing with are not capable of accessing Green Deal or understanding how a Green Deal works, and even if they’ve got the internet connections they can’t do that. So we offered to do that on their behalf and DECC has stopped it with the local authority because they won’t let you use an email address twice... I don’t think the Green Deal is there to help vulnerable people and those with fuel poverty, it’s helping those people who have got the capabilities and the finance to be able to have measures. They’re just totally reaching the wrong audience completely.” West Midlands Urban Council

“They consider that the main schemes cover the energy efficiency measures; but they don’t – there’s a big loophole for those in fuel poverty in all sectors.” Scotland Rural Specialists

7.6 Poor evaluation processes

Many of the case study project team members expressed frustration at their evaluation processes. This was a mixture of seeing opportunities to improve existing processes (e.g. by partnering with a university to be able to make reasonable assumptions about savings from behavioural changes) and frustration that capturing the impacts is so often impractical.

“The weakness is measuring the effectiveness, how to measure their actual energy saving, how to prove we’ve done any good.” Outer London Semi-Pros

“I think we’re not as strong at going back and contacting people to do the evaluation and monitoring as perhaps we should be.” West Midlands Urban Specialists

7.7 Relationship to Carbon Reduction Interventions

The relationship of fuel poverty interventions to carbon reduction interventions was explored with interview participants. Some reported that the interventions they delivered were broadly the same whatever the agenda.

“We’re still doing a lot of the same things, we’re just badging them a bit differently. We’re not really emphasising carbon saving as much as we were before, it’s much more about cost saving.” Inner London Council

However, a significant difference in target households for carbon reduction interventions was also highlighted.

“If we’re honest, if you focus on carbon you’re going to go for large, reasonably well off households because the average fuel poor individual is using less than they should. Inner London Council

This raised the question of whether projects focused on fuel poverty would offer energy advice visits to affluent households in their area.

“We don’t really want to be doing home visits for the comparatively affluent.” West Midlands Urban Specialists

“No I’m not interested in that.” Inner London Council

Another professional project suggested that they would offer telephone advice and factsheets in that situation.

“We’re not by and large going round to see somebody who’s saying, ‘I can afford to pay my bills and that’s fine. But I want to do it for environmental reasons’. In those sorts of circumstances we would be providing fact sheets and information or advice over the phone, and expecting them to be able to do that themselves.” South West Urban Specialists

7.8 Wish to carry out small-scale measures

Several of the projects without a budget for a “handyman” to carry out small scale home improvements reported that they wished to be able to that.

7.9 Help on a journey

Finally, three of the interviewees independently raised the framing of energy efficiency home improvements as a journey. This perspective highlights that impacts from interventions will not necessarily be felt immediately and that there are many opportunities over time to carry out measures.

“The other thing that I think really helps is to frame the whole thing for people in difficult houses as a journey, and to say that you’re not going to get this house into a great state in one go unless you’ve got a lot of money so why not treat this as a journey? West Midlands Rural Volunteers

8 Discussion

This section briefly explores some of the themes identified through the data presented from the twelve case study projects.

8.1 Effective fuel poverty interventions?

Reviewing the interventions employed by the twelve case study projects, those that combine financial, behavioural and measures-based support appear to be most effective. Few voluntary organisations were offering the former, and starting to employ such measures would be a useful addition to their set of tools. The impacts of behavioural measures remain elusive, but given the strong satisfaction in home visits reported by many householders, it appears likely that they are on a par with behavioural advice in many other energy advice projects.

The weak spot of most of the projects appeared to be technical measures. Where a handyman was employed, this facilitated some work being done, and in the case of the West Midlands Rural Volunteers project, this appeared to include a number of tailored and practical interventions that would slip through the net of many tick-box approaches to energy efficiency refurbishment.

However for fuel poor households in particular, the case study projects appear to be able to offer little by the way of more comprehensive measures such as solid wall insulation due to a combination of high costs and lack of available funding that poor households can reasonably access. This issue is one that can only likely be addressed by policymakers at the national scale by bringing in new funding streams to assist the fuel poor.

8.2 Effective delivery models?

In order to reach fuel poor households and offer home energy advice visits and a range of related interventions such as crisis support, it appears that long-term provision of a support service is the most appropriate approach. Housing this within a local authority appears to offer many benefits in terms of access to potentially more stable funding regimes and linkages with data on local households and partner organisations. A model of a local authority commissioning this service from a voluntary sector organisation also appears effective, and could bring the benefits of dedicated expertise and a strong independent brand.

Certain aspects of successful delivery models appear worth picking up and using in any similar project. A strong multi-partner referral network to connect vulnerable people with support services; a single long-term memorable phone number to access fuel poverty support; targeted mail-outs to more vulnerable demographic groups.

8.3 How to fund an effective delivery model?

The experience of successful projects reviewed in this research points towards Public Health England, Local Authorities and Social Landlords providing core funding to local energy advice support services. The evidence from the Inner London Council projects points towards savings for householders some way in excess of the project budget of £130,000, giving a persuasive economic rationale from a fuel poverty perspective. Covering core costs year on year appears essential to maintain the integrity of the service, avoiding the pitfall that many projects face at present of using multiple one-off project funding streams

to resource a core service. If core funding was in place, occasional grant funding could be applied instead to innovative projects to, for example, reach new audiences through partnership working.

8.4 How does a local fuel poverty energy advice project relate to the climate change agenda?

Several of the case study project co-ordinators stated that, given the choice, they would not prioritise energy advice support for wealthier households in their local area to cut their carbon footprint. If tailored energy advice is indeed an effective intervention to facilitate carbon emission reductions, and if a model of energy advice provision housed within fuel poverty focussed projects is advocated, what role, if any, is there for energy advice for carbon reduction? Some options that emerged from the present research include:

1. Community organisations offer home energy advice visits on a voluntary basis
2. Householders can receive advice over the phone and online
3. Householders contact tradesman to explore options for technical measures.

Option 1 is within the scope of the present research, and could hold great promise if the community groups wishing to engage in this work were there. Those reviewed in the present study have typically become inactive after a few years, mostly moving on to other projects, or sometimes halting or greatly reducing their activities. An increasingly sparse funding climate has contributed to this situation, and the challenge highlighted in this research of capturing the positive impacts of energy advice must also hinder the resourcing of community projects.

8.5 How do community organisations support local action on fuel poverty?

For the projects reviewed in the present research that were reaching significant numbers of householders, the role played by community organisations included:

- Promoting and facilitating home energy visits through individuals/organisations embedded within communities of place or interest
- For community organisations in contact with vulnerable people, signposting those at risk of fuel poverty through a local referral network to an energy advice service

This appears to be the most appropriate delivery mechanism and role, unless the organisations have the interest and capacity to step into the suggested role of managing a local support network. It seems particularly unfortunate that the two Semi-Professional projects reviewed, and perhaps also the West Midlands Rural Volunteers, could have potentially made the transition towards occupying this role, either alone or in partnership with others, but are now instead struggling to sustain activity with depleted funding.

Where such a project is not in place, there is also a potential role of seeking to fill that gap by providing an energy advice service. This research points towards this being a precarious existence, reliant on grant funding and most likely being pushed by funders' requirements into supporting particular niches (e.g. a particular cultural group or area) for a short term project. However, it could also provide much-needed support and would enable a build-up of knowledge to perhaps support a more strategic area-wide project in future years.

8.6 Are climate Change and fuel poverty agendas compatible?

The benefits of home energy advice visits lie in a tailored support approach, which is as applicable for fuel poor households as it is for wealthier households seeking to reduce carbon emissions. However the priority of the local energy advice agencies which have been studied and advocated for in this research is to support the fuel poor – such organisations are likely to be unwilling to offer home visits to the relatively affluent unless dedicated funding was made available. There is little evidence from this research that such householders would pay for a home visit – the West Midlands Rural Semi-Pros have recruited only two households in 2014/15 at a home visit price of £60.

In addition, a home visit to support carbon reduction does have some significant differences. Time spent on tariff switching, debt management, etc. is likely to not be required; homes are more likely to be over-heated rather than under-heated; change may be more challenging and complex if cost isn't restraining behaviour, opening up questions around changing habits, developing beneficial social norms and more. There could still be a lot of scope for community organisations to develop innovative projects to meet these challenges, which could run alongside dedicated local energy advice initiatives, perhaps collaborating to share knowledge or to train volunteer advisors for carbon reduction projects. This isn't a vision for community organisations to pick up the banner of providing a comprehensive programme of fuel poverty support, which seems to be best suited to staffed projects, but could be an opportunity for innovative and impactful initiatives with a distinct focus.

9 Conclusions

This research has explored the role of community organisations in supporting household energy efficiency activity. The original questions addressed were:

1. How can community organisations effectively engage fuel poor householders in undertaking energy efficiency measures through home visits?
2. How are these projects organised and how does this relate to their delivery mechanisms and impacts?

One of the main answers that has emerged from this study is that perhaps community organisations, in the sense of grassroots volunteer-run local bodies, may not be the best entities to effectively engage the fuel poor. Rather, larger funded projects either run by or commissioned by local authorities appear to be effective at playing that role, if the political will and financial support is made available to make this possible in more parts of the UK.

In this context, the role of community organisations would be to facilitate access to vulnerable community members, refer contacts for support and potentially engage in partnership working where this enhances the reach of the energy advice project.

However community organisations pursuing carbon reduction goals may still be excellent leaders in supporting local householders to pursue a low-carbon agenda, activity that may be unlikely to be funded through fuel poverty focussed initiatives.

These findings also point towards opportunities for further research and improved practice, which are summarised in the Executive Summary.

10 Bibliography

- Abrahamse, W., Steg, L., Vlek, C. and Rothengatter, T (2005). A review of intervention studies aimed at household energy conservation. *Journal of Environmental Psychology*, 25, 273–291.
- CLF (2013). *Report on the Cheshire Lehmann Fund Conference – Research Findings and Debate: The Psychology of Fuel Poverty*. Available at: <http://www.cheshire-lehmann.co.uk/home/cheshire-lehmann-fund-conference>. Accessed 2nd October 2014
- CSE (2014). *WISH 2013-2016*. Available at: <http://www.cse.org.uk/projects/view/1219>. Accessed 21st October 2014.
- Darby (1999). Energy advice—what is it worth? *Proceedings, European Council for an Energy-Efficient Economy Summer Study, paper III* : 3-05.
- DECC (2013). *Energy efficiency strategy 2013 update*. London: Department of Energy and Climate Change.
- DECC (2014a). *Community Energy Strategy*. London: Department of Energy and Climate Change.
- DECC (2014b). *Cutting the cost of keeping warm: a new fuel poverty strategy for England*. London: Department of Energy and Climate Change.
- DECC (2014c). *Learnings from the DECC Community Energy Efficiency Outreach Programme*. London: Department of Energy and Climate Change.
- DECC (2014d). *Role of Community Groups in Smart Metering-Related Energy Efficiency Activities*. London: Department of Energy and Climate Change.
- DECC (2014e). *Understanding the behaviours of households in fuel poverty: A review of research evidence*. London: Department of Energy and Climate Change.
- DECC (2014f). *Big Energy Saving Network – 2014/15 Grant Offer Fund*. London: Department of Energy and Climate Change
- Devine-Wright, P. & Devine-Wright H. (2006). *The Green Doctor Project: A Review*. Leicester: Groundwork Leicester and Leicestershire.
- FREE (2011). *Future of Rural Energy in England: Year 1 Report*. Available at http://www.calor.co.uk/media/wysiwyg/PDF/Calor_FREE_England_Year_1_Report.pdf. Accessed 2nd October 2014.
- FREE (2012). *Future of Rural Energy in England: Year 2 Report - Village Energy Audits*. Available at http://www.calor.co.uk/media/wysiwyg/PDF/Calor_FREE_England_Year_2_Report.pdf. Accessed 2nd October 2014.
- Hobson, K., Hamilton, J., Mayne, R. (2014). Monitoring and evaluation in UK low-carbon community groups: benefits, barriers and the politics of the local. *Local Environment*, 1–13. doi:10.1080/13549839.2014.928814
- Howden-Chapman, P., Crane, J., Chapman, R., Fougere, G. (2011). Improving health and energy efficiency through community-based housing interventions. *International journal of public health*, 56, 583–588.
- Ingle, A. (2013). *Behavioural Perspectives on Home Energy Audits: The Role of Auditors, Labels, Reports, and Audit Tools on Homeowner Decision Making*. Available at: <https://escholarship.org/uc/item/1323m27r>. Accessed 21st October 2014
- Maby, C. (2009). *Energy Advice in the UK - Future Needs and Priorities*. Available at: http://www.severnwyke.org.uk/downloads/Energy_advice_discussion_paper.pdf. Accessed 21st October 2014.
- Maxwell, J. (2005). *Qualitative research design: an interactive approach*. London: Sage Publications.
- McLean-Conner, P. (2011). Energy Efficiency: Principles and Practice - Community-centered Energy Efficiency Outreach, Delivery, Part 1 of 2. *Electric Light and Power*, 89, 10.
- McMichael, M. & Shipworth, D. (2013). The value of social networks in the diffusion of energy-efficiency innovations in UK households. *Energy Policy* 53, 159–168.

Middlemiss, L.K. and Parrish, B. (2010). Building capacity for low-carbon communities: The role of grassroots initiatives. *Energy Policy*, 38 (12), 7559–7566.

Owen, A., Mitchell, G., Gouldson, A. (2014). Unseen influence - The role of low carbon retrofit advisers and installers in the adoption and use of domestic energy technology. *Energy Policy*, 73, 169–179.

Ramsay, L. & Pett, J. (2003). Hard to Reach and Hard to Help: bringing energy efficiency to elusive audiences. *ECEEE Summer Study, June 2-6 2003*, St Raphael, France. Stockholm: European Council for an Energy Efficient Economy.

Rugkåsa, J., Shortt, N.K., Boydell, L. (2007). The right tool for the task: “boundary spanners” in a partnership approach to tackle fuel poverty in rural Northern Ireland. *Health & social care in the community*, 15, 221–230.

Wilson, C., Crane, L., Chryssochoidis, G. (2013). *Why do people decide to renovate their homes to improve energy efficiency?* Norwich, UK: Tyndall Centre for Climate Change Research.

Appendix A: One-page Project Summary

Used to promote project and as basis for project website (www.dmu.ac.uk/cohe)



Community Organisations and Household Energy

Overview

Community Organisations and Household Energy (COHE) is a research project running from October 2014 to March 2015, which will explore the role of community groups and local voluntary sector organisations in supporting householders to undertake energy efficiency measures.

COHE will focus on groups and projects that use home visits as part of their approach. It has long been observed that providing tailored energy efficiency advice or practical help through home visits can be very effective, but many agencies struggle to achieve access to homes, with lack of trust being an apparent constraint.

Community organisations hold potential to overcome this barrier and are already running or participating in a wide range of projects across the UK to help improve household energy efficiency.

This research aims to explore what activity is taking place, how it is being delivered and its impacts. The evidence gathered will be shared via a publicly available report produced for the Cheshire Lehmann Fund, and will be used to provide evidence for local and national government on how best to support this activity.

COHE is being carried out by researchers at De Montfort University's Institute for Energy and Sustainable Development, drawing on funding and support from the Cheshire Lehmann Fund.

Methodology

We will carry out 12 interviews with community organisations that are using home visits to support householders to carry out energy efficiency measures. We are keen to speak with a range of types of organisation, including:

- Projects within local sustainability initiatives (e.g. Transition Towns, Low Carbon Communities)
- Faith or interest based groups
- Neighbourhood-based community organisations (e.g. residents' associations)
- Voluntary sector organisations employing paid staff (e.g. energy agencies, support projects for the elderly)

We will focus on recruiting projects that have achieved some demonstrable success, but we are also interested in projects where the impact is still unclear or hard to measure. As well as on-going projects, we are interested in projects that ran recently and are no longer active. We also wish to recruit respondents to represent a diversity of perspectives and issues, such as:

- Projects using a range of methodologies (for example, home visits done as part of good neighbour schemes, peer-support projects and assessments done in partnership with Green Deal assessors).
- A range of target audiences (e.g. vulnerable households, members of particular communities)
- Projects operating in urban or rural settings.

Contact

For further information on the project, contact Dr Andrew Reeves on 0116 2506569 or areeves@dmu.ac.uk. For information about the Cheshire Lehmann Fund, go to <http://www.cheshire-lehmann.co.uk>

Appendix B: Participant Information Sheet

Given to participants prior to interview, along with consent form



Community Organisations and Household Energy Participant Information Sheet

Dear sir/madam,

You are invited to participate in a research project but before you decide whether you want to take part, it is important that you understand why the research is being undertaken and what your participation will involve.

Please take time to read the following information carefully, discuss it with colleagues if you wish, and ask if anything is unclear or if you would like more information.

What is the purpose of this study?

Community Organisations and Household Energy (COHE) aims to explore the role of community groups and local voluntary sector organisations in supporting householders to undertake energy efficiency measures.

COHE will focus on groups and projects that use home visits as part of their approach. It has long been observed that providing tailored energy efficiency advice or practical help through home visits can be very effective, but many agencies struggle to achieve access to homes, with lack of trust being an apparent constraint. Community organisations hold potential to overcome this barrier and are already running or participating in a wide range of projects across the UK to help improve household energy efficiency. This research aims to explore what activity is taking place, how it is being delivered and its impacts.

Why have I been invited to participate?

You are being invited to share your experience of delivering a household energy efficiency project that uses home visits as part of its approach. Your input will help us to understand how these projects are set up, organised and delivered and what impact they are having on the households that benefit from a home visit.

What will I have to do if I decide to take part?

You are asked to read this information sheet and decide if it is something you would like to do.

We are asking participants to support this research in three ways:

- Through a one hour interview conducted by Dr Andrew Reeves from De Montfort University
- By sharing documents that provide relevant supporting evidence (e.g. project evaluation reports)
- By forwarding a short survey relating to your project to colleagues and/or project beneficiaries (data collected from these surveys will complement data from your interview)

If you are willing to participate, you will be asked to sign a consent form and we will contact you via email or telephone to arrange a time for your interview. Participants completing a survey will be presented with project information and will be asked to give consent for their data to be used in the first part of the survey.

Depending upon your location, availability and preference your interview may be conducted face to face, via telephone or by Skype. We ask that you put aside one hour for the interview as it should last for 45-60 minutes.

During the interview you will be asked some questions about your experience and opinions and you will also have an opportunity to raise other issues that you believe may be relevant. You are under no obligation to answer the questions that are asked and you may decide not to answer any if you wish. We appreciate that there may be some restrictions upon the information that you are free to share, for example where data is commercially sensitive, and request that you only share information you are happy to have in the public domain. On request, we can send you a list of questions in advance, but we may explore other similar questions on the day.

In total 12 participants from Community Organisations from across England will be interviewed. All interviews will be audio recorded and information from the interviews will be analysed to identify common themes and issues.

Do I have to take part in this study?

No. Participation in this study is entirely voluntary.

Can I use my preferred language?

Where requested, and if possible, the information sheet and consent forms will be supplied in your preferred language. It may also be possible for interviews to be conducted in your preferred language, depending upon the availability of an interviewer. If your interview is conducted in a language other than English then the information you provide will be translated into English for the purpose of analysis.

What will be the benefits of taking part?

No incentives will be offered for your participation and it is not intended to benefit you directly. However your input will contribute to understanding of the potential impact of home energy efficiency visits delivered by community organisations. This learning will be shared through a publically available report and an academic journal paper.

What are the possible risks in taking part?

There are no anticipated risks but please ensure that you only share information that you are happy to have in the public domain.

What if I wish to withdraw from the study?

You are free to withdraw from the study at any stage before or during the interview and up to two months afterwards by contacting Dr Andrew Reeves. Any information you have provided up to that point will be destroyed. After this time, once analysis of the interview and write up of the study has begun, it will not be possible to isolate your contribution from the rest of the study.

Will my taking part be kept confidential?

Yes. Once the researcher has transcribed everything that was recorded during the interview, the tape will be erased. The transcript of your interview will be stored in a password protected file, accessible only by the interviewer and researcher conducting the analysis. Some of your words and phrases will be used for reports but these will not have any identifiable information within them. Your name or any other personal identifying information will not appear in any publications resulting from this study; neither will there be anything to identify your organisation unless you have provided explicit consent for this.

What will happen to the information I provide?

The information gained from your interview will only be used for the *Community Organisations and Household Energy* project and will not be used for any other purpose. Findings from the interviews will be incorporated into project reports and may also be included in publications and presentations about the project.

Ethical Approval

This project has been approved by the Faculty of Technology Human Research Ethics Committee at De Montfort University in Leicester.

What happens next?

If you would like to participate in the study please complete and return the consent form. You will be contacted by the researcher within one month to arrange a convenient time for interview.

Further information

If you would like to read more about the Community Organisations and Household Energy project you will find details on the project website <http://www.dmu.ac.uk/cohe>

If you have any questions about your invitation to participate or would like further information about the interviews please contact Dr Andrew Reeves on 0116 2506569 or areeves@dmu.ac.uk

Appendix C: Pilot Interview Schedule



Community Organisations and Household Energy: Interview schedule (pilot)

Welcome and thanks for taking the time for this interview.

I have some questions but our conversation does not have to be limited to those and please feel free to say if there are certain things that you prefer not to discuss. We can stop the interview at any time if you wish.

Before we begin, do you have any questions?

The purpose of this interview is to find out about [your project]: what was done, its impacts and how the project was established and run.

- 1. First of all, can you briefly describe the aims of your project?**
- 2. Can you talk me through the process of how a home visit to promote energy efficiency is delivered in your project?**
Probes: How households were recruited? Visit process (e.g. Advice? Signposting? Work done?); Any follow-up? Who does it?
- 3. Who was involved in delivering the project?**
Probes: Who did the visits? Who organised? Role of partners? Role of Local Authority?
- 4. What were the impacts of this activity and how did you know this?**
Probes: Take-up, and whether disadvantaged? How evaluated? Contacted after visit? Any non-energy impacts (positive/negative)? Able to share reports/evidence?
- 5. How did the project start?**
Probes: When? Who initiated? Motivation? Role of partner organisations and funders?
- 6. How was the delivery approach that you use decided upon?**
Probes: Who influenced? Based upon evidence of impact? Resources? Distinct motivation to other projects run by organisation?
- 7. What skills, knowledge and personality traits do you think are important for working on your project?**
Probe: Training or Mentoring done to develop? Interested in receiving/sharing?
- 8. How has the project managed to sustain its activity? [Or, if ceased, how did this come about?]**
Probe: Motivation; Skills and Knowledge; Funding and Resources; Partners; Evaluation; Take-up
- 9. What were the strengths and weaknesses of your approach in your view?**
Probe: Role of Trust – opening doors otherwise closed? Plus Probes from above.
- 10. What do you think would help your project achieve a greater impact?**
Probe: Motivation; Skills and Knowledge; Funding and Resources; Partners; Evaluation
- 11. Is there anything else you would like to add?**

Thank you for your time.

We would also like to send a short electronic survey to other people involved in the project to hear their views and to beneficiaries to hear about how the project has helped them. **Are you happy to help to pass this on?**

Appendix D: Final Interview Schedule



Community Organisations and Household Energy: Interview schedule (pilot)

Welcome and thanks for taking the time for this interview.

I have some questions but our conversation does not have to be limited to those and please feel free to say if there are certain things that you prefer not to discuss. We can stop the interview at any time if you wish.

Before we begin, do you have any questions?

The purpose of this interview is to find out about [your project]: what was done, its impacts and how the project was established and run.

1. First of all, can you briefly describe the aims of your project and your role within it?
Probe: Fuel Poverty? Interviewee paid/unpaid? Work outside of project?
2. Can you talk me through the process of how a home visit to promote energy efficiency is delivered in your project?
Probes: How households were recruited? Visit process (e.g. Advice? Signposting? Work done?); Any follow-up? Who does it?
3. Who was involved in delivering the project?
Probes: Who did the visits? Who organised? Role of partners? Role of Local Authority?
4. What were the impacts of this activity and how did you know this?
Probes: Take-up, and whether fuel poor? How evaluated? Contacted after visit? Any non-energy impacts (positive/negative)? Able to share reports/evidence? How many homes visited each year?
5. How did the project start?
Probes: When? Who initiated? Motivation? Role of partner organisations and funders?
6. How was the delivery approach that you use decided upon?
Probes: Who influenced? Based upon evidence of impact? Resources? Distinct motivation to other projects run by organisation?
7. What skills, knowledge and personality traits do you think are important for working on your project?
Probe: Training or Mentoring done to develop? Interested in receiving/sharing?
8. How has the project managed to sustain its activity? [Or, if ceased, how did this come about?]
Probe: Motivation; Skills and Knowledge; Funding and Resources; Partners; Evaluation; Take-up
9. What were the strengths and weaknesses of your approach in your view?
Probe: Role of Trust – opening doors otherwise closed? Plus Probes from above. Fuel poverty?
10. What do you think would help your project achieve a greater impact?
Probe: Motivation; Skills and Knowledge; Funding and Resources; Partners; Evaluation
11. Is there anything else you would like to add?

Thank you for your time.

We would also like to send a short electronic survey to other people involved in the project to hear their views and to beneficiaries to hear about how the project has helped them. Are you happy to help to pass this on?

Appendix E: Project Team Survey

INTRODUCTION

Community Organisations and Household Energy (COHE) aims to explore the role of community organisations in supporting householders to undertake energy efficiency measures through carrying out home visits.

We have already interviewed [REDACTED] about the home energy efficiency visits done through the project over recent years.

This short survey should take 5-15 minutes to complete, and is being sent to yourself and other people involved in organising the project, and is intended to capture some further perspectives on the delivery and impact of your work.

PARTICIPANT INFORMATION

The information gained from your survey will only be used for the Community Organisations and Household Energy project and will not be used for any other purpose.

Findings from the surveys will be incorporated into project reports and may also be included in publications and presentations about the project.

Your name or any other personal identifying information will not appear in any publications resulting from this study; neither will there be anything to identify your organisation unless you have provided explicit consent for this.

You are free to withdraw from the study at any stage and up to two months afterwards by contacting Dr Andrew Reeves on areeves@dmu.ac.uk or 0116 2506569.

1. What was your role in delivering the project?

(tick all that apply, adding further details in text box if appropriate)

- ☐ Project Planning (member of team)
- ☐ Project Planning (providing support from an external organisation)
- ☐ Delivering home visits
- ☐ Training home visitors

Other (please specify)

2. How effective do you think the project was in reaching and supporting households in fuel poverty, and why was this the case?

3. What has enabled the project to sustain its activity? (And/or, if it ceased running, why did this happen?)

**4. What do you think would have helped the project to achieve an even greater impact?
(e.g. changes in how it was run, external support, etc.)**

**5. Is there anything else you would like to add?
(we are interested in understanding the relationship between how you delivered your
project and the impact that it had)**

THANK YOU FOR TAKING PART!

Your responses will help us in our research to find out how community organisations can effectively help households to improve the energy efficiency of their homes.

If you have any questions about this research please contact Dr Andrew Reeves on 0116 2506569 or areeves@dmu.ac.uk.

PLEASE CLICK ON "DONE" TO SUBMIT YOUR SURVEY

Appendix F: Beneficiary Survey

INTRODUCTION

Community Organisations and Household Energy (COHE) aims to explore the role of community organisations in supporting people to improve the energy efficiency of their homes.

One of the projects we are looking at is [REDACTED], through which you received a home energy efficiency assessment.

This short survey should take 5-10 minutes to complete, and aims to find out how that visit was for you, and what impact it had on your household.

PARTICIPANT INFORMATION

The information gained from this survey will only be used for the Community Organisations and Household Energy project and will not be used for any other purpose. A summary of results will be shared with the organisation that carried out your home visit.

Your name or any other personal identifying information will not appear in any publications resulting from this study; neither will there be anything to identify the organisation that carried out your home visit unless they have provided explicit consent for this.

You are free to withdraw from the study for up to two months after completing the survey by contacting Dr Andrew Reeves on 0116 2506569 or areeves@dmu.ac.uk

1. How would you rate the quality and helpfulness of the home visit that you received? (We are interested in what you liked, what you didn't like and ideas for improvement)

2. What changes did you make to your home or energy use behaviour at home, if any, as a result of the visit?

(Please list any technologies installed or work carried out (during or after the visit) as part of your answer.)

3. If recommendations for energy efficiency improvements were made during your visit, what factors affected whether or not you carried them out?

(Please refer to the specific energy efficiency improvements in your answer)

4. Please add any other comments you'd like to share about the experience of your visit and the impact that it had

THANK YOU FOR TAKING PART

If you have any questions about your invitation to participate or would like further information about the interviews please contact Dr Andrew Reeves on 0116 2506569 or areeves@dmu.ac.uk

PLEASE CLICK "Done" to SUBMIT YOUR SURVEY.